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Workplace Ostracism:
A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Lived Experience

by
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Dedication

For my dad, with love.

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ABSTRACT

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We all want to belong, fit in and be accepted. It is not surprising that when there are difficulties feeling as though we belong, that we experience distress (Lau, Moulds & Richardson, 2009; Robinson, O'Reilly & Wang, 2013; Wirth & Williams, 2009). One of the ways in which that need can be obstructed at work is by ostracism.

Creating safe workspaces, a definition which goes beyond physical safety, is becoming more of a priority for employers and employees (Bruning & Turner, 2009; Neal & Griffin, 2002; Raines, 2011; Zaccarato, Barling & Iverson, 2005). As the focus moves along the continuum from blatant discrimination and bullying to less obvious counterproductive work behaviours such as incivility and harassment, how employees are being treated and treating others is an important consideration within workplaces. Workplace ostracism forms part of this continuum.

Taking a step away from the quantitative and positivist measures of workplace ostracism, this study explores the lived experience through interviews. Utilizing narrative and critical discourse analysis, this dissertation identifies new and unique perspectives of persistent workplace ostracism. It expands the definition and understanding of how ostracism is enacted within the workplace. It identifies consequences that have not previously been studied.

By exploring the lived experiences of persistent ostracism, this dissertation not only contributes in terms of providing the first identification of the long-term impacts, it also proposes a reframing of the understanding of how ostracism occurs at work by identifying locations of power. In doing so, the constraints to responding to ostracism are contextualized. This dissertation situates persistent ostracism within a trauma and abuse framework. Based upon this critical perspective, recommendations for interventions at the organizational, management and individual level are proposed.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

We all want to belong, fit in and be accepted. This want has been shown to be a basic human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This need to belong impacts individuals in all aspects of their lives, including social groups and workplace relationships. It is not surprising that when this basic need is blocked or when there are difficulties feeling as though we belong, that we experience distress (Lau, Moulds & Richardson, 2009; Robinson, O'Reilly & Wang, 2013; Wirth & Williams, 2009). One of the ways in which that need can be obstructed at work is by ostracism.

Workplace ostracism has received increasing attention over the past ten years and yet remains an under-researched area (Ferris, Brown, Berry & Lian, 2008; Hitlan, Kelly, Schepman, Schneider & Zarate, 2006b). Creating safe workspaces, a definition which goes beyond physical safety, is becoming more of a priority for employers and employees (Bruning & Turner, 2009; Neal & Griffin, 2002; Raines, 2011; Zaccaratos, Barling & Iverson, 2005). As the focus moves along the continuum from blatant discrimination and bullying to less obvious counterproductive work behaviours such as incivility and harassment, how employees are being treated and treating others is an important consideration within workplaces. Workplace ostracism forms part of this continuum and represents a difficult behaviour to quantify as frequently the experience is noticed more for what does not occur than what does (Robinson et al., 2013).

1.1 Definitions and Examples

Workplace ostracism is currently defined in one of two ways. Williams (2007) classifies ostracism as “ignoring and excluding individuals or groups by individuals or groups” (p. 427) within the workplace. Robinson et al. (2013) state “workplace ostracism is when an individual or group omits to take actions that engage another organizational member when it is socially appropriate to do so” (p. 206). As both of these definitions represent, the focus of workplace ostracism is on being left out or being shut out.

Considering that most people use work as a place “to form friendships, social connections and inclusion with others” (Robinson et al., 2013, p. 205), workplace ostracism creates problems for both individuals and organizations (Ferris et al., 2008; Williams, 2007). While the research on ostracism based in workplaces is limited, it is known that the experience of being ostracized is common, if not universal (Ferris et al., 2008). In a workplace survey, 66% of respondents indicated they received the silent treatment at work and over 16% claim this occurs on a frequent basis (Fox & Stallworth, 2005). The same study found 58% reported having information withheld knowingly, with over 20% stating this occurs frequently. Over 42% reported phone calls not returned and over 44% were left out of meetings. This study, and others, illustrate that ostracism is a very common, if not a regular practice within workplaces (Ferris et al., 2008; Hitlan et al., 2006b; Robinson et al., 2013; Wu, Yim, Kwan & Zhang, 2012; Zhao, Peng, Han, Sheard & Hudson, 2013a).

However, very few studies have explored the phenomenon of ostracism within actual workplaces and how the behaviours attributed to ostracism affect individuals. The studies that have been conducted found that there was a negative impact on organizational commitment (Hitlan et al., 2006b), employee job performance (Wu et al, 2012), and counterproductive work behaviours (Hitlan & Noel, 2009; Zhao et al., 2013a), negative workplace attitudes (Hitlan et al., 2006b), increased strain on work family conflict and declining family-life satisfaction (Liu, Kwan, Lee & Hui, 2013), and reduced helping behaviours towards peers (Balliet & Ferris, 2013).

To see some of the devastating impacts of being left out or shut out at work, we can look to the media which provides examples of the extent that individuals will go to in order to stop the impacts of ostracism:

In Silicon Valley, “the tech industry’s ‘brutal ageism’ means that if you don’t fit the archetype — say, you’re over 35 and only wear hoodies when you’re exercising and have a few kids and a mortgage — you have to work twice as hard to get ahead. They’re stressed out and ostracized by the ‘culture’, worried about their wardrobe choices, wondering if they should freshen up with some subtle plastic surgery, and struggling all the while to downplay their family lives” (Freidman, 2014).

Lionel Watts, who “returned to the workforce, paralysed as a result of polio, he was shocked and disappointed to find he was ostracised by his able-bodied mates. The dynamic man vowed to correct that attitude, and in the early 1960s founded

an organisation with the aim of creating a workplace for people with disabilities” (Brown, 2014).

Joseph Monaco, “a borough police officer who has been lauded as a hero many times in his 16-year career says that he has become a pariah in his department.... was ostracized by the force, he says. This ostracism, he said, ‘has created a dangerous and hostile workplace’. Monaco makes the charges against department brass in a lawsuit filed last month in state Superior Court in New Brunswick.... Last April a doctor placed him on medical leave for ‘work-related stress disorder, coupled with anxiety as a result of the harassment and retaliation’ After Monaco returned to work in September, Donnataria, who remains his supervisor, refused to ‘speak or interact with (Monaco) in any way’ the complaint says” (Bichao, 2014).

In Herriman, Utah, the city council is trying to find a way to investigate ostracism, as they are hearing that employees fear speaking out.

“...Councilmember Craig Tischner said. ‘I’ve had employees come to me with issues but have then asked that I not take action because they feared retaliation.

The survey gave them an anonymous avenue to be heard without fear of retribution, and allow us to officially consider their concerns.’ Several past employees [who wish to remain anonymous] who have spoken to the South Valley Journal say that there is a close circle of friends/employees around City

Manager Brett Wood, and that the employees not in that ‘circle’ live in fear. One of the results of the survey said that some employees feel ‘there is an atmosphere of fear’ in the work place. ‘You can’t tell Wood that something should be done differently than what he has said. If an employee does, they do so at the risk of being bullied, threatened and/or ostracized by the close circle he keeps around him,’ one former employee said” (Ricks, 2014, p. 8-10).

1.2 Research Approach and Rationale

Ostracism, like bullying and other hidden or subtle forms of incivility, is not an easy phenomena to deal with (Hepburn, 1997; Hutchison & Eveline, 2010). One of the reasons for this is that there is almost no information on the lived experiences of ostracism. We do not have a complete picture of what it is like to experience ostracism at work. There is virtually no research on the experience of ongoing or persistent workplace ostracism. As a result, there is very little written on what could be helpful at work for an individual who is being ostracized, what types of supports an individual would benefit from and how an organization might address ostracism. We do not know the full impact of ongoing ostracism on an individual, what types of interventions might be more effective than others, or how people cope with ongoing situations of being left out.

To date, most ostracism research has been conducted in laboratory settings, using inclusion/exclusion styles of computerized games to determine how ostracism affects

individuals (see, for example: Bastian & Haslam, 2010; Carter-Sowell, Chen & Williams, 2008; Derfler-Rozin, Pillutla & Thau, 2010). This type of research does not address the ongoing nature of workplace ostracism, but instead creates an artificial environment in which a person experiences a single episode of ostracism. The simulation of ostracism may provide indications of what a person may feel within that particular experiment, but the transference of these findings to the workplace is not known. The experience of being left out of a computer simulation game and the experience of being left out of an important social group may not be similar experiences. The only way to understand the impact of ongoing workplace ostracism is to fully explore what the experience has been like, or is like, for those who have had the actual experience.

Previous studies have highlighted the impacts felt immediately following ostracism within a laboratory environment. These impacts have included withdrawal from social opportunities (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009; Zadro, Williams & Richardson, 2005), painful emotional experiences (Lau et al., 2009; Molden, Lucas, Gardner, Dean & Knowles, 2009; Wirth & Williams, 2009; van Beest & Williams, 2006), feelings of racism and discrimination (Goodwin, Williams & Carter-Sowell, 2010; Wirth & Williams, 2009), lower levels of self esteem (Jones, Carter-Sowell, Kelly & Williams, 2009; Zadro, Williams & Richardson, 2005), and anger, non pro-social behaviour and self defeating behaviour (DeWall, Twenge, Gitter & Baumeister, 2009; Jones et al., 2009; Leary, Twenge & Quinlivan, 2006; Molden et al., 2009; Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco & Bartels, 2007; Twenge, Cantanese & Baumeister, 2002; Twenge, Zhang, Cananese & Dolan-Pasco, Lyche & Baumeister, 2007; van Beest & Williams, 2006).

While these may be some of the impacts or feelings that are part of workplace ostracism, this cannot be known without researching the lived experience.

In order to fully explore the experience of ongoing workplace ostracism, a social constructionist framework is proposed. This theoretical basis will offer a way of exploring persistent ostracism which has the potential to uncover the dynamics of the experience within the workplace. A social constructionist approach aims “to provide a viable alternative to the positivist-empiricist philosophy of science which has long been supposed to ground the pursuit of psychological knowledge” (Hibberd, 2005, p. 1). The positivist-empiricist approach has been the predominant method used to study ostracism to date. Using a social constructionist approach differs from the positivist approach as it is designed to allow for a more unconstrained and undefined way of approaching and understanding a socially dynamic process (Hibberd, 2005). This method will attempt to remove the predetermined categories frequently associated with ostracism (see, for example: Ferris et al., 2008) and instead focus on the experience and ways of knowing from the individual within the context of their workplace (Burr, 2003). This method is built on the foundation that knowledge and understanding is created through social interactions, and that the version (s) of these interactions are socially constructed (Burr, 2003), largely through language and conversation (Cunliffe, 2008; Hibberd, 2005). Therefore “social reality, identities and knowledge, are culturally, social, historically and linguistically influenced” (Cunliffe, 2008, p. 125).

Ostracism implies a victim and perpetrator relationship. A situation where there is clearly a power dynamic at play is also appropriate for a social constructionist approach,

as there may be structures which maintain the dynamic. The social constructionist approach will allow the exploration of the polarity, and to see how behaviour related to ostracism is enacted at work.

It is the language that constructs this experience, and in some cases of ostracism, it may be the lack of language or absence of interaction which is the construct. How does this shared knowledge of who does and does not belong get communicated and understood? We do not know the process by which ostracism is created and maintained. It is these interactions which form the patterns by which some people are excluded, and some are not. This has a link with power relations, as it becomes some type of workplace norm to permit some people to be excluded by some others. The process by which this is able to happen is one of the focuses of this study.

When looking at the prevalence of certain types of ostracism (ie. silent treatment), we see that this experience is common. The discourse related to the silent treatment is fairly consistent: it has happened to most people, in both personal and professional relations (Fox & Stallworth, 2005); most people have also utilized the silent treatment (Williams, Shore & Grahe, 1998). Therefore, this one particular aspect of ostracism becomes normalized – it is something that people expect to have happen to them. This represents how an aspect of ostracism becomes “produced, reproduced and transformed with discourse” (Leitch & Palmer, 2010, p. 1195). The dominant discourse represents the socially accepted and created ways of defining and understanding experiences (McIlveen & Schuethelss, 2012).

However, while most employees may have experienced, for example, the silent treatment, most do not have this experience repeatedly. This study seeks to uncover how repeat ostracism is understood and maintained.

What is understood as workplace reality is constructed between people or groups of people (Burr, 2003). The experience of ostracism is constructed between two people, or groups of people. Within this study, I seek to understand the perspective of the ostracized. The experiences that are created in a workplace are “time-and-culture-bound and cannot be taken as once-and-for-all descriptions of human nature” (Burr, 2003, p. 7).

This requirement of context highlights the need for non-laboratory approaches to study workplace ostracism. Workplace interactions are based upon connections, histories and dependencies. Removing the interpersonal aspects of a personal situation and testing that separately from context may not provide an accurate or informed outcome.

Another limitation of the laboratory studies is that the interaction tested is a behaviour, or in some cases the lack of a behaviour. These experiences are void of language, verbal or otherwise. It is the shared experience through language that creates understanding (van Dijk, 2012). Therefore while the computerized simulation within a laboratory may represent one type of learning or understanding, it occurs without the context that is represented through language. This type of situation does not parallel what would occur in a workplace, and therefore it does not seem feasible to attempt to use an artificial environment to learn about one that is socially constructed, largely by language, and/or the removal of it.

This supports a poststructural view of understanding human interactions, and therefore is not expected to identify one single truth which is representative of all experiences of ostracism. Instead, the approach will be to capture both the context and the language (or lack of) that contributes to the dynamic and thus the experience. As ostracism is a social practice, it is necessary to understand how encounters between people construct what is labelled as ostracism (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Ramsey, 2005).

Once the ostracism occurs and is then repeated, the next question becomes: How is the social dynamic of ostracism maintained, or is it, and under what types of circumstances? This raises the question of power, and also perhaps that of oppression and inequality. A critical approach to ostracism may help to uncover the power differentials which permit the behaviour, or conceivably encourage or terminate it. Studying the language and other symbolic representations which are characterized within interactions, how some presentations are given the status of ‘factual’ and how this impacts the hierarchy of power is of particular interest. In other words, how is this power, or lack of power, performed in the workplace (Blackledge, 2012; Burr, 2003; Wodak, 2002).

The situations must be described in a way that will allow for the “nature and significance of the experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 39) to be uncovered that reveals the essence of the experience. The goal is to capture the lived experience in a way that will illustrate how the individual experienced the event and drew meaning from it. Therefore the context is an important part of understanding meaning. A complete description which includes both a historical and environmental basis is required if the context is to be

understood. It is this rich description of the lived experience which allows for the meaning of the events to be both understood and identified. The perspective of the individual is integral to the construction of meaning and this can only occur if a full picture of the nature of the workplace and the relationships within it are understood.

In order to ensure that this type of information can be accessed, interviews were selected as the primary means of data collection. This method allows for a complete and detailed explanation of the experiences so that perspective can be understood and meaning attributed (Weiss, 1994). “A qualitative interview is an excellent method if you want to gain insight into the intentions, feelings, purposes and comprehensions of the interviewee” (Cruickshank, 2012, p. 42). The interviews were transcribed in order to generate a text to which a critical discourse analysis was applied.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) combines the study of language as represented by discourse, through a critical social lens. The lens includes “power relations, ideologies, institutions, social identities” (Fairclough, 2012, p. 9), inequalities, social conflict and domination (Wooffitt, 2005). The aim of applying CDA to experiences of ostracism is to understand the viewpoints of those who have experienced this phenomena, by examining the forces that exist socially for such behaviours to be created and maintained. As all interactions are social constructions, the discourses that support and reinforce the concept is also social in nature. Discourses which are sustained, repeated or reproduced represent one way in which the act of ostracism may be maintained. A critical view is important as the word ostracism itself has a power based inference. As ostracisms are enacted on one person/group to another, the power differential, whether

structural or perceived, becomes relevant. That power differential may also define what actions and reactions are socially appropriate. Within a particular context, the actions, the reactions and those which are inadmissible are all socially reinforced (Käpylä, 2012).

The CDA technique will allow the identification of the “various ways in which power can work in language....There are constraints on context (what is said or done); constraints on the kinds of interpersonal relationships people enter when they engage in talk; and constraints on subject positions (the kinds of participatory roles which people can occupy in their discourse)”. (Wooffitt, 2005, p. 141).

Understanding the context and the dynamics by which these social interactions are defined and enacted provides a comprehensive view of how ostracism is communicated, reinforced and what behaviours or lack of behaviours convey the message of not belonging. CDA not only considers the enacted experiences (ie. silent treatment), it goes beyond the measures of a behavioural scale and includes the context, language, relationships and other dynamics created between people and groups, for a more rich and comprehensive understanding of the experience (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004).

One of the issues with the current approach of utilizing scales and laboratory experiments within ostracism research is that it presents a particular discourse, which provides a ‘definition’ of what it means to be ostracized at work (Willig, 2000). As a result, certain experiences are considered to be part of being ostracized, and others are excluded. Instead of exploring the subjective experience, the research tests a predetermined and therefore legitimized version of ostracism (ie. Ferris et al., 2008

Workplace Ostracism Scale). For example, instead of exploring what individuals attribute as ostracism and experience when they feel ostracized, only a select number of outcomes or possibilities are presented. This pre-determines the possible impacts as well, as only a limited number of alternatives are presented, further reinforcing the conceptualization.

This one example of a discourse highlights the need for qualitative research. Currently, the dominant discourse related to ostracism reflects the way that the general population, or lay person, understands, defines and talks about ostracism (Willig, 2000). This understanding of ostracism is also prescriptive: it tells us what behaviours comprise ostracism, and conversely, what does not belong (McIlveen & Schultheiss, 2012). Therefore the knowledge boundaries are maintained and reproduced (Leitch & Palmer, 2010). When multiple voices or perspectives are not explored, the discourse is again reinforced.

This is true for both the experience of being ostracized and the impacts of ostracism. As a consequence of exclusively quantitative approaches, some discourses of ostracism are legitimized, reinforced, accepted and thus dominate. Other discourses therefore are not validated or acknowledged. As a result of repeatedly utilizing one method to study ostracism, the discourse has become largely consistent: Ostracism is a painful experience which reduces needs satisfaction, but it is not emotionally based. Some people respond pro-socially by attempting to resolve or re-integrate and others respond anti-socially by becoming angry or loafing. This has promoted one single way of knowing and measuring an experience, and draws conclusions regarding a complex social

phenomena from a simple, single, depersonalized creation. Further, it does not present any options related to coping for individuals or organizations. This type of research recreates an experience and then classifies the emotional outcomes as significant or not significant, most which terminate at the end of the experiment. As a result, there is no information on how individuals cope, how organizations are impacted, or what types of actions improve or further deteriorate relationships.

1.3 Research Questions

The current research focuses on examining the lived experience of workplace ostracism to bring to the forefront issues which have not yet been explored within the ostracism discourse: How is workplace ostracism enacted, communicated and maintained? How do individuals understand that they are being ostracized and what are the emotional, social and professional impacts and consequences? How are ostracizers 'allowed' to ostracize by the organization and how is such power gained and performed? What individual and organizational alternatives exist to intervene to reduce the impacts and consequences?

1.4 Significance and Overview

Adopting a lived experience perspective and by applying a critical discourse lens, this study departs from mainstream ostracism research to examine the persistent experience of workplace ostracism. This study will address the frequently mentioned and substantial gap of what happens when a person is subject to persistent ostracism within a socially vital context (Robinson et al., 2013; Williams, 2007b; Wesselman, Nairne & Williams, 2012a; Zhao et al., 2013).

This research will uncover three specific streams to further explore the existing gaps. The first area of focus is the emotional, social and professional experience of the individual. This includes how persistent workplace ostracism is interpreted, how it impacts the person and the resulting consequences. The second focus is on the organizational context and examines how an individual is able to ostracize another, where the power is located and how it is enacted. The final focus is alternatives to resolution for both individual and organizations. This area will look at available options to reduce or terminate ostracism within the confines of the organizational realities.

The study will first present a comprehensive Literature Review (Chapter 2) which addresses ostracism, two related meta-analyses and workplace specific ostracism. This chapter presents a summary of the ostracism research to date, common methodologies and findings. It then presents the conclusions from two meta-analyses which define both confirming and conflicting relationships. The limited research on workplace-based

studies is then presented, which identify employment and work-specific outcomes. The chapter concludes with an identification of specific gaps which this study will address.

Chapter 3 outlines the Theoretical Framework of social constructionism, which links the study structure and approach, as well as the concepts of power and reflexivity. This chapter provides the ontological and epistemological foundation for the current study.

The study Methodology is found in Chapter 4. Included in this chapter are the study design considerations. Method of collection (interviews) and analysis (critical discourse analysis) provide the details for how data is treated. The participant profiles and reflexivity are also included in this chapter.

Chapter 5 – Narratives of Workplace Ostracism, is arranged first by examples of ostracism, then by themes. The themes are grouped by emotional, social and professional consequences. This is followed by a discussion which presents a brief comparison between the laboratory experiments and lived experiences of ostracism.

The interpretation of the narratives is presented in Chapter 6 – Analysis. In this section, the experiences of the participants are interpreted through a critical discourse lens and results in three unique power-based positions: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Traits, Abusive Relationships and Alternatives for Responding. This chapter illustrates the new perspectives which are available as a result of applying a qualitative methodology to workplace ostracism. It challenges some of the existing assumptions about workplace neutrality as it relates to policy and human resources, and explores the power of management silence and inaction.

The analysis presents a unique framework by which to view the recommendations related to interventions (Chapter 7 – Recommendations, Limitations and Future Research). The existing recommendations regarding individual and organizational responses are challenged, additional alternatives based on the lived experiences are presented, including a specific address to those who are currently being ostracized. The study ends with a discussion of the limitations of the current research and then proposes areas for further research. It also suggests a way to extend and enhance the findings and recommendations, as well as alternative ways to continue to explore persistent workplace ostracism.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous chapter has presented a brief overview of the study of persistent workplace ostracism. As mentioned, there have been no qualitative studies to date which examine this phenomena, although the knowledge of ostracism has been growing for approximately 20 years within the psychology and business fields (Williams, Forgas & Von Hippel, 2005). The research on workplace ostracism is a much more recent stream with most publications occurring within the last seven years.

As a relatively new field of study, there exist some very significant gaps within the knowledge base. Some areas have received an abundance of attention, such as laboratory studies examining needs threats (see Williams (2007a) for a summary) while other areas, such as the long-term impacts on those who have experienced persistent ostracism, have received virtually no consideration. As a result, there are many unknowns within this area of research, in particular, what it is like to be subjected to workplace ostracism and the resulting impacts on both individuals and organizations is sparse. Further, the methods for studying ostracism are also limited, with the majority of studies utilizing controlled laboratory experiments with undergraduate students. While the current literature provides a starting point for examining persistent lived experiences, there are many deficiencies.

This section will first present the definitions of ostracism and other related terms. This is followed by a brief overview of the progression that has occurred within ostracism research, and then a breakdown of findings to date by category of outcomes. The

categories that will be explored represent the majority of the research conducted to date: the four fundamental human needs (belonging, self-esteem, control and meaningful existence); aggression, anti-social, and anger responses; anxiety and rumination; personality and mood. That will be followed by the meta-analysis findings and the outcomes specific to gender, and finally a section specific to workplace ostracism. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the gaps that have been identified and the issues that are associated with the research to date.

Within each of the categories, a brief description of how the area may relate to the current study is included, and the ways in which the current study may be able to expand upon the current research strategy.

2.1 Definitions

In order to determine which literature would be included, it was first necessary to examine the definitions of ostracism, and the related topics of social exclusion, rejection, incivility, and bullying. In particular, the focus was on acts which would partially or completely represent the currently understood definition of ostracism.

As previously stated, there are two commonly utilized definitions of workplace ostracism. Williams (2007a) classifies ostracism as “ignoring and excluding individuals or groups by individuals or groups” (p. 427) within the workplace. Robinson, O’Reilly & Wang (2013) state “*Workplace ostracism* is when an individual or group omits to take actions that engage another organizational member when it is socially appropriate to do

so” (p. 206). As both of these definitions represent, the focus of workplace ostracism is on being ignored, left out or being shut out.

It should be noted that for the terms social exclusion and rejection, the definitions are not entirely clear, or widely accepted. Many of the research articles do not provide a definition of social exclusion or rejection, presumably assuming that these are known concepts.

Social exclusion can be defined as “ a broader, more encompassing term, insofar as it denotes all phenomena in which one person is put into a condition of being alone or is denied social contact” (Blackhart, Nelson, Knowles & Baumeister, 2009, p. 270).

This definition is closely related to that of ostracism, and in some studies, the methodologies and induction methods for social exclusion and ostracism are the same. Both definitions have the aspect of not being connected or being denied a connection, either on a temporary or permanent basis. Therefore, as it is very difficult to distinguish between the two concepts, social exclusion research was included.

Incivility, while clearly distinct from rejection, has some overlap with ostracism due to the rude, insensitive and impolite method of treatment (Cortina, Magley, Williams & Day Langhout, 2001). It is also generally considered to be not as impactful as ostracism, as incivility is defined as “low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect” (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457).

Rejection represents a somewhat distinct occurrence, which implies a more permanent state in opposition to acceptance (Leary, 2005), or as “a refusal of social

connection” (Blackhart et al., 2009, p. 270). The definition also implies that between two people, one was actively looking for acceptance or continuation of the relationship, and another was not (Blackhart et al., 2009). A substantial part of the rejection literature is concerned with familial or intimate relationships. This type of research was not included, as the majority of workplace relationships would not be intimate. However, research on rejection that used similar methods of invoking ostracism were included.

Bullying was the final concept that was considered. The interest in workplace bullying developed with workplace ostracism, as the more subtle forms of workplace behaviours were being studied. This also included workplace incivility. While all three represent deviant or counterproductive workplace behaviours, workplace bullying looks at a range of behaviours, usual repeat and persistent behaviours, used to invoke “emotional and social pain” (Juvonen & Gross, 2005, p. 161).

“Bullying,” the umbrella concept for these various conceptualizations of ill-treatment and hostile behaviors toward people at work, ranges from the most subtle, even unconscious incivilities to the most blatant, intentional emotional abuse. It includes single incidents and escalating patterns of behaviour (Fox & Stallworth, 2005, p. 439).

While ostracism certainly includes behaviours that are hostile in nature, some bullying types of behaviours (such as name calling, harassment, constant criticizing) are in many ways counter to ostracism behaviours. Where bullying often results in continued contact with the target, ostracism seeks to do the opposite, by minimizing or ignoring the target.

Bullies often pay a great deal of attention to the target, constantly interacting or harassing, whereas the ostracizer seeks to avoid contact as much as possible. While the goals related to power, punishment, control, humiliation and segregation (Robinson et al., 2013) may be similar, the means by which they are accomplished are not.

The Overview of Research Progression will present a brief summary of how ostracism research has developed and changed over time. From this point forward, ostracism will be used to describe the method of exclusion for any of the studies which were included in the literature review. This section is intended to provide a snapshot of the development of ostracism research and the included variables. It is followed by a more comprehensive discussion of key areas.

2.2 Overview of Research Progression

The majority of ostracism specific research coincided with the advent of the computerized game 'Cyberball'. This game allows for laboratory testing to be conducted in which participants are told that they are playing the game with others, when in fact it is a computerized game. Developed and first utilized by Williams, Cheung & Choi (2000), Cyberball is a ball tossing game in which ostracism is invoked by having the other 'players' not toss the ball to the participant. Usually, the participant is lead to believe that they are playing the game with others who are also in the laboratory or study, when it is actually a computerized game.

The participant in Cyberball is assigned to an inclusion, complete ostracism or partial ostracism condition. Within the ostracism condition, the participant is 'tossed' the ball a few times, and then does not receive the ball for the remainder of the game. Within the inclusion state, the participant receives the ball an equal number of times to the other computerized players. Post-game tests consistently show that the participant that has been ostracized from the game is aware that they have not been included. This method of invoking ostracism has been one of the primary methods of laboratory testing since its inception in 2000 (Williams & Zadro, 2005).

As Williams & Nida (2011) summarize, "more than 5000 individuals have now taken part in studies employing the Cyberball paradigm, and we have consistently found that enduring approximately 2 to 3 minutes of ostracism in this context will produce strongly negative feelings...the four psychological needs theorized to be threatened by ostracism – all consistently show the negative impact of ostracism" (p.72).

The advent of Cyberball allowed researchers to study the acute reactions to ostracism, or what it was like to be 'left out'. This created many new study opportunities, as the majority of research prior had relied on a recall method (remember a time you were ostracized) (such as Bastian, Jetten, Chen, Radke, Harding & Fasoli, 2012; Maner, DeWall, Baumeister & Schaller, 2007; Poon, Chen & DeWall, 2013) or a future alone condition (a variable indicates you will be ostracized) (such as DeWall, Maner, Rouby, 2009; Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco & Bartels, 2007a).

The study of the acute ostracism has been paired with needs threat to determine how ostracism impacted the four basic needs of belonging, control, self-esteem, and

meaningful existence (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Much of the early research used pre and post need tests to try to determine how ostracism would, or if it would, thwart basic human needs (such as Williams, Govan, Crocker, Tynan, Cruickshank & Lam, 2002; Wirth & Williams, 2009; Zadro, Williams & Richardson, 2005).

In studies which did not report separate results for needs satisfaction, the aggregate showed all four needs were negatively affected (Gerber & Wheeler, 2014; Jones et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2011; Lau, Moulds & Richardson, 2009; Van Beest & Williams, 2006; Wirth & Williams, 2009).

The inquiry then branched into other types of outcome measures, including aggressive/anti-social and reconnection/pro-social behaviours, in order to study how people would react to being ostracized.

The reconnection literature, while less prolific than the anti-social, provided insights into situations where a person would increase efforts, in order to be re-included (such as Carter-Sowell, Chen & Williams, 2008; Derfler-Rozin, Pillutla & Thau, 2010; Jamieson, Harkins & Williams, 2010; Kerr, Seok, Poulsen, Harris & Messe, 2008; Maner et al., 2007). The opposite line of questioning sought to determine first why a person would respond in an anti-social way (such as Chen, DeWall, Poon & Chen, 2012; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009; Twenge, Zhang, Catanese, Dolan-Pascoe, Lyche & Baumeister, 2007b; Warburton, Williams & Cairns, 2006), closely followed by, or parallel to those that investigated the role that situational factors and social anxiety plays in responding to ostracism (such as Ciarocco, Sommer & Baumeister, 2001; Oaten, Williams, Jones & Zadro, 2008; Sommer & Yoon, 2013; Wirth, 2009; Zadro, Boland & Richardson, 2006).

Another line of research included the impact of ostracism on mood (such as Bastian & Haslam, 2010; DeWall & Baumeister, 2006; DeWall, Twenge, Gitter & Baumeister, 2009). This was an area where mixed results were frequently found, leading to the development of a numbness hypothesis that has since been, as least partially, if not fully, refuted by meta-analysis findings (Blackhart et al., 2009; Gerber & Wheeler, 2009). The two ostracism based meta-analyses have indicated that the numbness hypothesis is false, and that there is a negative impact on mood as a result of ostracism.

Self-regulation (such as Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005; Bozin & Yoder, 2008; Carroll 1998) and the role of cognitive functioning (such as Twenge, Catanese & Baumeister, 2002; Twenge, Catanese & Baumeister, 2003) was often explored with research on mood, in an attempt to discover the role that the stressor of ostracism had on processing and brain function. The pro-social/anti-social response, the mood and self-regulation hypothesis were often linked with personality, self-esteem, rumination and, at times, gender. There is a great deal of overlap between studies and often contrary results were found. For example, some studies have found that women work harder at ingratiation due to social needs, others have found that men work harder at ingratiation due to the importance placed on identity at work. This will be discussed in the section on gaps and issues with the current research, and addressed by specific topics within the category discussions.

More recently, the interest in ostracism has moved into two areas: groups and workplaces. There has been research in the past few years, which considered ingroup/outgroup biases and impacts, as well as maximal/essential group definitions

(Such as Bernstein, Sacco, Young, Hugenberg & Cook, 2010). At the same time, there has been an increase in studies conducted within workplaces (such as Chung, 2015; Hitlan, Clifton & DeSoto, 2006a; Leung, Wu, Chen & Young, 2011). The workplace based studies will be presented separately from the general ostracism research.

The movement toward ‘real life’ situations has been slow. Some of the more recent studies have begun to examine situations in context, using 2 or 3 part wave studies to make connections between ostracism and other workplace traits or behaviours (such as Liu, Kwan, Lee & Hui, 2013; Wu, Wei & Hui, 2011; Zhao, Peng & Sheard, 2013b). However, this research is still very limited.

One frequently mentioned and substantial gap with the research is what happens when a person experiences persistent workplace ostracism within a socially vital context (Robinson et al., 2013; Williams, 2007a; Williams, 2007b; Wesselmann, Nairne & Williams, 2012a; Zhao et al., 2013b). This is the focus of the current study. The need for a new method of studying ostracism at work will be discussed within the following section related to ostracism findings. This is intended to highlight not only the gaps within the current research, but also to rationalize and substantiate the need for a lived experience study.

2.3 Ostracism Findings

In each of the following sections, a brief description or definition of the consequence being studied will be provided. The findings within this area will then be

briefly discussed. Also within each area a link with the current research study will be presented.

Due to the large number of studies, in Appendix A, a chart is provided which presents all of the ostracism-relevant studies to date. This chart outlines the methods of invoking ostracism, the study subjects, the findings and the categories in which the findings apply. A similar chart, in Appendix B, is a summary of the workplace based research, which follows an identical format. The goal of both of these charts is to provide a snapshot of each study. This chapter will include a discussion of the more important factors, as they relate to persistent ostracism and this study.

Also at the beginning of each topic is a short table to illustrate what the research to date has established. This visual is intended to present a very brief illustration which summarizes the topic area.

Four Basic Human Needs – Needs Satisfaction

Figure 1

Ostracism Findings of Needs Satisfaction

One Event Ostracism → ↓ Aggregate Needs Satisfaction

One Event Ostracism → ↓ Need to Belong

One Event Ostracism → ↓ Self-Esteem Needs

One Event Ostracism → ↓ Meaningful Existence

One Event Ostracism → ↓ Need for Control

Need to Belong

It would be difficult to dispute that K.D. Williams has been a pioneer in the area of ostracism. Since the mid 1990's, he has been researching many aspects of ostracism, was fundamental in the exploration of ostracism via Cyberball, and is known for developing one of the first theoretical models of ostracism. “Central to William’s model of ostracism, however, was the assumption that four fundamental human needs could be individually and simultaneously affected in targets of ostracism. In particular, when targets are ignored or excluded, their basic needs for belonging, control, self-esteem, and meaningful existence are threatened” (Williams, Case & Govan, 2003, p. 327).

The belongingness hypothesis, with a focus on interpersonal behaviours, describes the importance of belongingness as fundamental human need:

...the belongingness hypothesis is that human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at a least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships. Satisfying this drive involves two criteria: First, there is a need for frequent, affectively pleasant interactions with a few other people, and, second, these interactions must take place in the context of a temporally stable and enduring framework of affective concern to each other's welfare. Interactions with a constantly changing sequence of partners will be less satisfactory than repeated interactions with the same person(s), and relatedness without frequent contact will also be unsatisfactory...Furthermore, a great deal of human behavior, emotion, and thought is caused by this fundamental interpersonal motive. (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497)

From this summary, it is clear that the belongingness need is related to an ongoing and somewhat permanent or stable type of relationship, in which there is a caring component. However, ostracism research largely focuses on the impact of belongingness following a brief interaction with a stranger or unknown other. Yet, the research consistently shows a significant decline, at least temporarily, in feelings of belongingness (Bernstein et al., 2010; Chernyak & Zayas, 2010; Gerber & Wheeler, 2009; Jones, Carter-Sowell, Kelly & Williams, 2009; Kerr et al., 2008; Molet, Macquet, Lefebvre & Williams, 2013; Ren, Wesselmann & Williams, 2013; Williams et al., 2002; Williams et al., 2003; Williams, Cheung & Choi, 2000; Williams & Richardson, 2004; Wirth & Williams, 2009).

These studies used a one-time, short-term experiment in which participants interacted via Cyberball with a stranger for, on average, three minutes. This brief, depersonalized interaction was enough to have a noticeable impact on the participant's feelings of belonging. This finding is consistent throughout ostracism literature.

Referring to the belongingness research, these interactions do not represent the type of belonging that individuals require, and yet the impacts, at least in the acute phase, are profound. Other studies which used recall, diary or other methods as a means of inducing ostracism instead of Cyberball, had similar findings (Bastian & Haslam, 2010; Molden, Lucas, Gardner, Dean & Knowles, 2009; Nezlek, Wesselmann, Wheeler & Williams, 2012; Smith & Williams, 2004; Stout & Dasgupta, 2011; Zadro et al., 2005;).

It appears that even without meeting the criteria for belongingness, that ostracism has a negative impact on the need satisfaction state. This may be due to the ongoing seeking of relationships that could satisfy the need. If belongingness is a true fundamental need, individuals would be continually seeking and evaluating interactions on the basis of potential future connections (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Therefore, even ostracism from a stranger would be giving a clear indication that connection is not possible, a social bond will not occur, resulting in a negative impact on the individual. Further, they highlight that "The fact that people resist breaking off an attachment that causes pain attests to how deeply rooted and powerful the need to belong is" (p. 503). Therefore, not only is there a strong desire to seek out new connections, but also to avoid breaking them, even in the very short term.

However, the longer term need for belonging should not be overlooked, as it is seen as essential to human motivation. The authors highlight two essential features of belonging that ostracism research has not fully explored due to the methodologies employed. “First, people need frequent personal contacts or interactions with the other person...Second, people need to perceive that there is an interpersonal bond or relationship marked by stability, affective concern, and continuation into the foreseeable future” (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 500).

This aspect of need to belong has not been explored in relation to ostracism, and yet it represents a very significant issue: for those being ostracized, does the thwarted need to belong result in further efforts to re-engage with the ostracizer, or does it encourage relationships with others? Is it possible to re-establish a relationship with the ostracizer, and under what circumstances?

Caring relationships form over time and provide the key benefits of belonging, such as happiness, reduced vulnerability and stress, positive affect and helping. The short-term experimental research clearly indicates that in the acute phase, one act of ostracism impacts belonging, at least on a temporary basis. The true impacts of ostracism, those which occur within the context of the type of relationship described by Baumeister & Leary (1995) are unknown.

As the isolated incident of ostracism by a stranger/computer causes distress, the real life experiences are assumed to be much more impactful. Baumeister & Leary (1995) support this view. They highlight “that people try to preserve relationships and avoid ending them” (p. 502); this is due to a number of factors. First, the continuation of

relationships that provides the experience of belonging also provides positive mood states. Further, “happiness in life is strongly correlated with having some close personal relationships” (p. 506). This naturally counters the negative impacts of loneliness, anxiety and depression. Secondly, the experiences of belongingness are connected with trust, social support and assistance in times of need. This leads to more effective coping during times of stress, grief or other personal challenges. These clear benefits of belonging form the basis of why people attempt to maintain the connection and the relationship, even when it may no longer truly be fulfilling the need. The potential positive outcomes far outweigh the negative. However, there is also the pain associated with the threatening of, or the dissolving of, a relationship, to consider as an independent factor.

The threats to belongingness themselves can cause distress, if not pain. When relationships are threatened, negative emotions emerge, most predominant are anxiety, fear, depression and loneliness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). “In fact, social exclusion may well be the most common and important cause of anxiety” (p. 506).

Another aspect to consider is hurt and pain. “The fact that people resist breaking off an attachment that causes pain attests to how deeply rooted the need to belong is” (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 503). The authors also provide examples of where a relationship itself may be dangerous or violent, and yet the resistance to dissolve the connection is strong. The threat of “a lack of belongingness should constitute severe deprivation and cause a variety of ill effects” (p. 497). Therefore, not only is the motivation to seek the experience of belongingness, but also there is motivation to maintain the relationships and avoid the pain associated with termination.

It would be assumed that if this is true within an experiment, that the impact would be more significant when it is an important other. This is one area which will benefit from the current study, as it will be possible to explore the impacts on belonging within a socially important context.

Self-Esteem Needs

Along with belonging, control and meaningful existence, self-esteem is considered to be one of the primary human needs that can be threatened during ostracism (Williams, 2007a). Laboratory studies have provided clear support that self-esteem was significantly impacted immediately following ostracism (Kashdan et al., 2014; Molden et al., 2009; Stillman, Baumeister, Lambert, Crescioni, DeWall & Fincham, 2009; Williams et al., 2002; Zadro et al., 2005).

Self-esteem is related to a sense of psychological security; an individual with a strong sense of self-esteem has a positive view of themselves and feels as though they are an important or valued individual (Forgas, Williams & von Hippel, 2003; Williams, 2007a). “Ostracism strikes at the heart of self-esteem because the target is rejected as being unworthy of the source’s attention or acknowledgement. In addition, when the reason for ostracism is unclear, targets may generate numerous self-depreciating justifications for this treatment, further lowering their self-esteem” (Williams et al., 2003, p.328). Therefore, self-esteem is a gauge by which people determine if they are both worthy and accepted.

While limited, the studies to date have not found that self-esteem moderates the impact of ostracism (DeWall & Baumeister, 2006; McDonald & Donnellan, 2012; Twenge et al., 2007a; Williams et al., 2000). While each of the studies took different approaches and measures, the themes were consistent. When examining pain thresholds and tolerance for pain, “neither self-esteem nor social sensitivity significantly moderated the effects” (DeWall & Baumeister, 2006, p.5). In testing the impacts on helping (pro-social) behaviour, “state self-esteem did not mediate the results” (Twenge et al., 2007a, p.59). When examining the impacts of internet ostracism using trait self-esteem, the impact on self-esteem increased as ostracism became more complete, and “ostracism was just as debilitating to high as to low self-esteem individuals” (Williams et al., 2000, p.759).

However, when examined by meta-analyses, a different picture emerges. Those who had been ostracized did report that they experienced decreased self-esteem and that these levels were much lower than those who were accepted or within a control condition. The change in level of self-esteem, according to Blackhart et al. (2009) indicates “that laboratory manipulations of social exclusion per se have not reduced self-esteem. The difference reported...between rejection and all other conditions might therefore be due to boosts in self-esteem in some condition. Consistent with that view, we found that the self-esteem of accepted participants across multiple studies was significantly higher than that of the neutral control conditions” (p.297).

This contradiction suggests that depending on the type of laboratory experiment, that different impacts are not only possible, but likely. Further, it highlights the need to be

examining ostracism outside of the laboratory, as the reason that different impacts are being found is that the experiences are very different. While the intention of the laboratory is to mimic or create a situation which resembles that outside of the laboratory, clearly this is not the case. The mixed results related to self-esteem highlight the need to study ostracism in real life. As well, it may be that self-esteem impacts occur over time. This will be one of the benefits of the current study, as it will examine a longer time frame, and global versus situation specific self-esteem.

Need for Meaningful Existence

With the exception of a few specific studies, meaningful existence is usually studied within the context of the three need threats, and is not connected to other factors as directly as belonging, self-esteem and control. For belonging, there are connections with mood and personality, as well as the motivation to re-connect or repair existing social relationships. Self-esteem is also usually studied within the context of mood, and has both need satisfaction and personality components. The need for control is strongly linked with anger, aggression and anti-social coping responses. While meaningful existence is measured in most ostracism studies along with the other three needs, it is rarely explored.

How people find meaning in life, or what makes for a meaningful life is an age old question. Stillman et al., (2009), provide this definition: “*meaning* refers to a nonphysical reality inherent in the relationship between a symbol or representation and that to which it refers. By meaning of life, however, people typically intend not a

dictionary definition of life but rather a way to make sense of their existence....The belief that one is living a meaningful life is associated with positive functioning” (p.686).

Previous research on meaningful existence outside of ostracism has used words such as satisfaction, enjoyment, recognition, and even happiness (Stillman et al., 2009; Williams, 2007a). It has also been suggested that the impacts on meaningful existence can be similar to that of control, and that the dehumanizing aspect of ostracism plays a major role in blocking that need. For example, one cannot feel a meaningful existence if they cannot get recognized, in the case of ignoring or refusing acknowledgment (Williams, 2007a; Williams, 2007b).

As summarized by Stillman et al. (2009), the foundational work by Baumeister in 1991 provides a clear description of the conditions under which a life is seen as meaningful.

First, a sense of *purpose* is reached when people perceive their current activities as relating to future outcomes, so that current events draw meaning from possible future conditions. Second, people desire feelings of *efficacy*. People feel efficacious when they perceive that they have control over their outcomes and that they can make a difference in some important way. Third, people want to view their actions as having positive *value* or as being morally justified. That is, people are motivated to act in a way that reflects some positive moral value, or at least to interpret their behavior as conforming to ideals and standards of what is approved and acceptable. Fourth, people want a sense of *positive self-worth*. They seek ways of establishing that they are individuals with desirable traits. Finding some way of believing

oneself to be better than other people seems to be a common form of this need for meaning (p. 686-687).

This description is perhaps the best way to connect meaningful existence and ostracism. Clearly, experiences of ostracism will impact all four areas of purpose, efficacy, value, and positive self-worth. The impacts on these areas will be dependent upon the type of ostracism encountered and the context, but the expectation is that ostracism could impact all four areas simultaneously.

Consistently, studies find that ostracized individuals report lower levels of meaningful existence (Jamieson et al., 2010; Molet et al., 2013; Stillman et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2002; Wirth & Williams, 2009; Zadro et al., 2004). Within studies which used a face-to-face method, the impacts were stronger. This is one area of research which will benefit from the lived experience methodology. As the meaning in life includes aspects related to purpose, efficacy, value and self-worth, a study in which workplace experiences are presented can represent the existence in a context-specific manner.

Impacts on meaningful existence were stronger when ostracized by friends and close others than acquaintances and strangers (Nezlek et al., 2012). This again is a good fit for a study on workplace ostracism as members of the workgroup could represent significant others.

It is also proposed that deficiencies in control and meaningful existence as a result of ostracism are linked in terms of being more likely to produce anti-social responses. The assumption is that “When belonging and self-esteem are particularly threatened, we

might be more likely to observe prosocial responses; that is, responses that serve to increase the individual's inclusionary status....If control and meaningful existence are particularly threatened, more antisocial reactions may be expected because antisocial acts achieve control and demand attention" (Williams, 2007a, p. 444). This may be because "individuals will be less concerned with being liked, and more concerned with being noticed" (Williams, 2007b, p. 242). Using anti-social behaviours may command immediate recognition, helping to restore, at least partially, the feeling of meaningful existence.

However, the ways in which people respond to reduced meaningful existence following ostracism is unknown. Additionally, while Nezelek et al. (2012) has shown that the impacts vary based upon the relationship with the source within real life situations, it is difficult to propose how meaningful existence would be restored within relationships that are longstanding and important. Further, there is the possibility of defeat. For those who receive repeat messages which reduce meaningful existence, it is proposed that "They feel little ability to change their situation, and have resigned themselves to feeling unworthy of attention at all" (Williams, 2007b, p.244).

Need for Control

Need for control is defined as feeling as though one has "a sufficient amount of personal control over one's social environment" (Williams, 2007a, p.443).

“People strive to understand, predict, and control their environments in order to maximize positive outcomes. Accordingly, the motivation for control has considerable adaptive value” (Williams et al., 2003, p. 327). This concept of control is related to perceived control. There are many situations in which an individual does not have control. This in itself is threatening. “Thus, if ostracism thwarts control, then aggressive responding is one way to restore or fortify the sense of control” (Williams, 2007, p. 241). Therefore, what may initially appear to be counter to the need for belonging, may actually be the need for control.

When someone feels like they are invisible, excluded and have no means of pro-social restoration of control, not only is an anti-social or aggressive measure easier, it is also faster. Lashing out, drawing attention to oneself, punishing someone else or otherwise trying to act out can accomplish, at least partially, a sense of control. This connection is discussed in the section on Aggression and Anti-Social Responses.

As with meaningful existence, the majority of research shows that the immediate measure of the need for control was negatively impacted by ostracism (Bastian & Haslam, 2010; Jamieson et al., 2010; Kelly, McDonald & Rushby, 2012; Molet et al., 2013; Warburton et al., 2006; Williams et al., 2002; Zadro et al., 2004). Further, the impact is more significant when face-to-face. The authors propose that this is due to those playing or participating virtually having an increased sense of control in deciding whether or not to remain, which may not exist when there is perceived social pressure to continue the interaction. This could be because “targets of ostracism have less opportunity to actively participate in the conflict, which in turn prevents them from engaging in behaviors that could help them satisfy threatened needs” (p.140).

The study of the need for control presents interesting opportunities within the current research. The studies to date have been restricted by the ability to restore control within the testing environment. However, there would be other arenas in which control could be restored. Looking at ostracism within the context of the employee's life, as opposed to one interaction, may provide a more comprehensive explanation of both how control may be threatened, and restored.

Aggression, Anti-Social Responses and Anger

Figure 2

Ostracism Findings of Aggression, Anti-Social Responses, & Anger

One Event Ostracism	→	↑	Aggressive Behaviours
One Event Ostracism	→	↓	Helping Behaviors
One Event Ostracism	→	↑	Anti-Social Behaviours (retaliation, dishonesty, resentment)
One Event Ostracism	→	↑	Anger Emotion

Aggression and Anti-Social Responses

As discussed previously in reference to the need for control, not all responses to ostracism have the end goal of reconnection. In this section, reactions to ostracism which show aggression, lashing out or intending to harm others, and withdrawal will be examined. These responses within ostracism literature are often labelled as negative reactions (Williams & Sommer, 1997) 'anti-social' (Bastian et al., 2012; Chow, Tiedens

& Govan, 2008; Kerr et al., 2008; Leary et al., 2006; Williams, 2007b) maladaptive (Williams & Zadro, 2005) or self-defeating (Baumeister, Twenge & Nuss, 2002).

Initial research in which aggression was a response to ostracism seemed to be a surprise, or at least an unexpected response. Yet when examining the reasons why people use ostracism, aggression is often identified. Ostracism is used to punish those who violate social rules or norms (Maier-Rigaud, Martinsson & Staffiero, 2010; Masclet, 2003). The act of ostracism itself is aggressive although perhaps more subtle and subversive than hostile or physical aggression; it is an act of aggression. It should not be surprising or unexpected that aggression would be met with further aggression (Leary et al., 2006). Further, it is not uncommon for people who have experienced aggression to seek revenge or retaliate, in the case of ostracism, as an ego-protecting response to feelings or experiences which are dehumanizing (Bastian & Haslam, 2010; Bastian, et al., 2012). “In fact, rejection may be one of the most common precursors to aggression” (Leary et al., 2006, p. 111).

Further, “People rarely aggress against those whom they like or evaluate positively at a given time. As a result, some degree of derogation of the other person may be a pre-requisite for aggression” (Leary et al., 2006, p.114).

The link between dehumanizing experiences and barriers to social connections are longstanding. As Bastian & Haslam (2010) summarize, the denial of a social connection “is a central aspect of treating them as less than human” (p. 107). Part of feeling human is being connected to others. “Being ignored and treated with indifference appear to be central to both dehumanization and social ostracism” (Bastian & Haslam, p.107). This

experience of being dehumanized stands in direct conflict with the need for belonging. Aggressive behaviours are most commonly linked with the need for control, in terms of needs satisfaction in the short term. However, from the dehumanizing perspective, it would appear that the need for belonging may be primary but so severely thwarted in the acute phase that it is not seen as a realistic option. Exacerbated by the dehumanizing experience, aggression seems to be a natural response (Bastian et al., 2012).

In examining the ostracism – aggression link, this section will look at the self-regulation/cognitive deterioration hypothesis, the cyclical nature of retaliation, and finally the act of withdrawal or giving up. The connection between anger (as a mood state) and aggressive responses to ostracism will also be included in this section rather than that of mood.

All of the research that involves the connection between aggression and ostracism has been strictly laboratory based. As a result of the disconnection from a real life situation, only one behavioural response is measured.

The research on aggression utilizes as a main premise the need for belonging hypothesis, and views reengagement as the prosocial response to ostracism (Bastian, et al., 2012; Baumeister, Twenge & Nuss, 2002; Chow et al., 2008; DeWall, Twenge, Gitter & Baumeister, 2009; Gerber & Wheeler, 2009; Kerr et al., 2008; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009; Warburton et al., 2006). This assumes belongingness is the primary motivator for pro-social behaviours.

However, there are other proposed reasons as to why people would respond in an anti-social or aggressive manner to ostracism. The need for control may take priority

when there is no possibility for reconnection or no ability to re-engage. There are other explanations which have also been considered, including anxiety (Oaten et al., 2008; Zadro et al., 2006), relational devaluation (Gerber & Wheeler, 2014; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009), cognitive impairment (Bastian & Haslam, 2010; Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005; Twenge et al., 2002; Twenge et al., 2003), angry or negative mood (Twenge et al., 2007b; Williams et al., 2000; Zadro et al., 2004), and future versus present focus (Baillet & Ferris, 2013).

When ostracized and presented with limited possibilities of behavioural choices, ostracized participants were far more likely than non-ostracized participants to select more aggressive behaviours (Baillet & Ferris, 2013; Baumeister & DeWall, 2005; Twenge et al., 2007b; Warburton et al., 2006). This does not mean that when presented with other options that those who experienced ostracism choose aggression; rather when ostracized, they were more likely to administer aggressive responses than those who were included. Warburton et al. (2006) also found that those who were ostracized and not given an opportunity to exert a form of control were even more aggressive, linking aggression with the need for control. Twenge et al. (2007b) illustrated similar findings, using lack of helping behaviours as a measure. Those who were not able to make a choice, or regain even a small bit of control, participated in aggressive, anti-social behaviours. They were also less likely to participate in behaviours that could contribute to increasing belonging, and instead exerted control by not volunteering, not helping others and not cooperating with the group.

Linking to the dehumanizing hypothesis, Williams (2007a) discusses lack of control in terms of feeling invisible. Aggression is proposed as a means for being noticed, not necessarily included, and that an action, which would reduce invisibility would not be a movement toward belonging but toward control. Further, it would be more 'human' to receive a negative response than no response at all (Zadro et al., 2005). This is similar to the dehumanizing concept in which people find it difficult to tolerate situations in which they are ignored or others act as if they are not present (Bastian & Haslam, 2010; Bastian, et al., 2012; Zadro et al., 2005).

Due to the limited research on ostracism and aggression, it is difficult to clearly see patterns of behaviour. However, when looking at the different methods of studying aggression, an anti-social nature of responding appears to be as likely an outcome as a prosocial one.

Also commonly proposed is the cycle of aggression, although research in this area is also sparse. The theory related to the belief that aggressive behaviours lead to aggressive responses, and ostracism, as a means of controlling or punishing others, is an aggressive, or perhaps a passive-aggressive act depending upon the method (Leary et al., 2006). This idea has been extended into a personality-type proposal, that aggressive people are often excluded, and as a result, continue to behave in aggressive ways.

One such explanation which has yet to be explored is the concept of 'getting even', direct retaliation, or as an extension of social exchange theory. There is evidence of reducing cooperation and helping which could be an example of this (Baillett & Ferris,

2013; Twenge et al., 2007b), however, research which shows the target of ostracism seeking revenge on the source of ostracism has not yet occurred.

Williams, Case & Govan (2003) also predict that retaliation is more likely when it occurs in an indirect manner, much like that of the original ostracism. “The hostile reactions are more likely to surface when attributions for the hostile behavior are ambiguous...likewise, when the behavior is disguised or hidden, it may be more likely to be antisocial” (p. 339). Their study also found that “As the measures become more implicit, however, targets of ostracism show evidence of resentment, retaliation, and hostility” (p. 339).

Smart Richman & Leary (2009) also propose a situation in which ostracism leads to more aggression. “The second set of motives involves angry, antisocial urges to defend oneself or to hurt the source of the rejection...People who are rejected often feel angry and sometimes act on their aggressive urges” (p.368).

They also explain that sensitivity to rejection can occur, and that those individuals “are particularly likely to have antisocial reactions to being rejected” (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009, p. 374). The cyclical nature is also highlighted: “Overall, research suggests that rejection related to relationship-damaging responses such as lower empathy and less pleasant behaviors” (p. 375) can lead to further incidents where they are rejected. This view is supported by others, who have found that ostracism can lead to the belief or expectation of further ostracism, which in turn promotes further anti-social responses based upon the sensitivity to ostracism (Bastian et al., 2012; Warburton et al., 2006; Williams, 2007a, Williams, 2007b).

Often associated with the heightened anxiety, the selective attention or hypervigilance toward further ostracism may result in a form of a self-fulfilling prophecy; whether by engaging in aggressive, retaliatory behaviours or through withdrawal. As both actions do not result in re-joining the group or re-establishing relationships, and the cycle of ostracism can persist (Bastian et al., 2012; Gerber & Wheeler, 2009; Heeren, Peschard & Philippot, 2012; Maner et al., 2007; Oaten et al., 2008; Zadro et al., 2006).

One possible way for the cycle to be broken may lie in the re-establishment of control. As mentioned previously, a means to restore control may reduce aggressive or antisocial responses immediately following ostracism (Twenge et al., 2007b; Warburton et al., 2006). This was accomplished by affording the participant a degree of control in which they could adjust the timing of an unpleasant stimulus (Twenge et al., 2007b) or determine an unpleasant consequence for another (Chow et al., 2008; Warburton et al., 2006). Social support has also been proposed as a means of regaining control. Reminding participants of positive and supportive people in their lives has been shown to reduce aggression (Twenge et al., 2007b).

The lack of available alternatives for restoring control will be explored within the current study. The laboratory restricts these alternatives. The interview will allow for a full exploration of options for responding, both within the work situation and in other areas of the individual's life. This is important as the basic needs may be restored within different social groups or other environments.

Anger

Initial research on mood and ostracism did not indicate a clear indication towards how people felt after being ostracized. However, meta-analysis studies have shown a clear picture in terms of negative mood and ostracism (Blackhart et al., 2009; Gerber & Wheeler, 2009). This section will look specifically at the research which has addressed the feelings of anger which are associated with being the target of ostracism.

Anger, more so than other negative emotions (such as sadness or loneliness) has been connected to aggressive responses. While anger would be classified as a negative emotion or mood, the impacts of all negative emotions are not identical. “The differences between sadness and anger in producing antisocial responses are important because much of the research on emotions in the context of social exclusion has relied on the distinction between positive and negative emotions, but not differences among discrete negative emotions” (Chow et al., 2008, p.901).

From the limited research on anger and ostracism, this seems to be the case. Within experimental conditions, participants who were excluded or ostracized indicated significantly more angry feelings than those who were included (Chow et al., 2008; Jones et al., 2009; Nezlek et al., 2012; Zadro et al., 2004). For experiments in which the specific emotional experience of anger was measured, the results were consistent.

Transferring anger into aggression however, has not been extensively studied. Chow et al. (2008) examined the link between distinct negative reactions and aggression. Their studies revealed that those which were unfairly excluded felt anger and this was connected with the administration of an aggressive consequence for another.

Nezlek et al. (2012) conducted research that is, to date, unique. Ostracism was studied in everyday life, using a diary method in which participants recorded incidences of ostracism, how it occurred, by whom, and how they felt as a result of the experience. Not surprisingly, “people reacted negatively to being ostracized. They felt as if they belonged less, had less control, had lower self-esteem, their existence was less meaningful, and they felt less apologetic and angrier” (p. 95). The research did not measure how the target responded. This certainly raises questions in terms of the strength of the anger emotion, aggressive behaviours and revenge within real-world situations. Initial explorations in this area indicate that the connection between the feeling of anger and aggressive responses following ostracism is very likely.

Research on the silent treatment has not extended into aggression, but has addressed anger. When being given the silent treatment (behaviours such as not talking or making eye contact), levels of anger increase, while the desire to apologize is mixed, with equal reports of wanting and not wanting to apologize (Williams et al., 1998). This illustrates the varied responses to ostracism; the pull to belonging and the push toward control. What is clear is that when treated in a way that fails to recognize a person as a human, the need to take action to restore humanity, either by pro-social or anti-social means is strong and linked with needs of both belonging and control.

Therefore while the anger response to ostracism in terms of an emotional reaction seems clear, how that impacts behaviours does not. This study will allow for the exploration of anger and the resulting behaviours in the workplace. As it is unclear how anger emotions will impact behaviours, an exploratory approach will be advantageous.

Anxiety and Rumination

Figure 3

Ostracism Findings of Anxiety & Rumination

One Event Ostracism → ↑ Anxiety

One Event Ostracism → ↑ Rumination

One Event Ostracism → ↑ Anxiety → ↑ Recovery Time from Ostracism

Anxiety

The link between ostracism and anxiety has received considerable attention, first beginning with research on social exclusion (Gerber & Wheeler, 2009). There are a number of ways in which anxiety is believed to be both an antecedent and an outcome of ostracism. The emotion of anxiety appears to have a specific impact, which for some may also be similar to anger in the cyclical nature. This section will examine feelings of anxiety following ostracism, the selective attention that can be created as a result, and the role that anxiety, as a predisposition, may play in expectations of future ostracism.

Social anxiety is directly related to a fear of social rejection (of which ostracism is a form)...socially anxious individuals typically encode more threatening cues during social interactions, and hence are likely to interpret mild or ambiguous forms of exclusion as threatening. Thus, the impact of ostracism may be larger in

socially anxious people than in non-anxious individuals. (Zadro et al., 2006, p.693)

Being socially anxious is connected with a degree of hypervigilance on social cues. In particular, those who are socially anxious pay more attention to cues which could indicate further ostracism. They are also more likely to view a neutral or ambiguous cue as threatening (Buckner, DeWall, Schmidt & Maner, 2010; Heeren et al., 2012; Oaten, 2008; Zadro et al., 2006). Also, not surprisingly, those with higher pre-experiment levels of anxiety had higher levels post-experiment. These outcomes are linked with both threat perception (Heeren et al., 2012) and selective attention theories (Buckner et al., 2010; Heeren et al., 2012; Oaten et al., 2008). These theories suggest that those who are socially anxious “typically view themselves as unable to make positive impressions on others, lacking in social status, and socially undesirable (Alden, 1987; Miller, 1995). Social anxiety is directly related to a fear of social rejection (of which ostracism is a form), and can occur even in situation where relationship formation is unlikely” (Oaten et al., 2008, p. 473).

There is also some evidence that what the socially anxious pay attention to depends upon either the need that is activated (belonging or control) or the possibility for reconnection. Buckner et al. (2010) found that selective attention was present, but that the tendency toward positive or negative focus was dependent upon whether or not ostracism had occurred. For those:

with high fear of negative evaluation (a core feature of social anxiety) who received feedback that was unrelated to social exclusion attended preferentially to

negative faces (compared to those who experienced social exclusion feedback). In contrast, among those with high fear of negative evaluation, social exclusion threat relative to non-exclusion threat was related to greater attention to happy faces” (p. 453).

This finding is counter to that of Zadro, Boland, and Richardson (2006) who found that socially anxious people are more likely to show an attentional bias toward the threat. They also found that “highly anxious participants recovered from the effects of the ostracism experience more slowly than did the non-anxious participants. In other words, the adverse effects of being ostracized persisted longer in the socially anxious” (p.696).

This indicates, similar to other studies, that once ostracism was experienced, that there was a desire to restore belonging by engaging, or re-engaging within social situations (Jamieson et al., 2010; Maner et al., 2007), especially if an opportunity to do so was immediately present, as in the Buchner et al. (2009) study. “...but once socially anxious people experience feedback regarding social exclusion they no longer preferentially attend to social threat. Instead, they allocate their attention to potential sources of social acceptance” (p.454).

These two findings are perhaps counter to each other, or perhaps not. Both possibilities seem likely given the mixed research findings on need to belong versus need to control. Kelly et al. (2012) found that arousal increased with ostracism, and proposes that it could be similar to a stress response. Zadro, Boland and Richardson (2006) proposed that the response to ostracism varies based upon the acute and non-acute

measures, and that while impacts may be similar, the duration may not be, resulting in longer term rumination for those who are socially anxious. Further, in situations where individuals withdraw following ostracism, increased rumination occurs (Molden et al., 2009). This rumination may result in further heightened sensitivity to rejection cues (Oaten et al., 2008).

If the socially anxious are more likely to ruminate following ostracism, this may lead to a cycle similar to that of the anger/aggressive scenario. If socially anxious people spend more time re-living, remembering or re-assessing situations of ostracism, this may result in hypervigilance towards cues, and potential misinterpretation of neutral or ambiguous cues. If this occurs, socially anxious people may be responding, either physiologically or emotionally to ostracism – neutral situations in a way consistent with ostracism, compounding the impacts, and further increasing anxiety. This increase in anxiety could continue to lead to cue-sensitivity and repeat experiences of perceiving ostracism. Using the initial definition of social anxiety, this would reinforce that there is risk of rejection and could increase the level of fear.

These conclusions are hypothetical. The research on anxiety and ostracism is too limited to draw conclusions, and very far removed from real-life situations. However, it does appear the situations of ostracism are very impactful on those who have social anxiety, that the impacts may be more severe and that self-evaluation and rumination may play a role which can result in a cyclical experience. The current study will have the advantage of being able to examine anxiety as both an existing trait which impacts the

experience of ostracism, and anxiety created by ostracism.

Rumination

While the idea that ostracism can lead to rumination has been proposed, the research is limited. This could be due to the difficulty of measuring rumination in laboratory settings. Smart Richman & Leary (2009) suggests a range of responses to ostracism which may lead to negative outcomes. Rumination is one of the possibilities they discuss, related to both an impaired ability to self-regulate and decreased cognitive functioning.

Self-regulation, defined as the ability to alter or modify one's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors, enables people to override their naturally selfish inclination in order to remain in line with the standards set by their social group...Effective self-regulation therefore increases the possibility of acceptance by one's group. Failure to self-regulate effectively, in contrast, should decrease the likelihood of acceptance and instead should lead to possible rejection and exclusion from the group” (Baumeister & DeWall, 2005, p.63).

Rumination and social cognition is highlighted as “people tend to search for and attend to evidence that confirms what they already believe to be true” (Cacioppo & Hawley, 2005, p. 102). Therefore, if one believes they are not included, they will notice situations in which this is true or could be perceived as true (Sacco, Wirth, Hugenberg, Chen & Williams, 2011) This then creates further thoughts of a lack of belonging and the rumination continues.

“Ruminating about real or imagined rejection may usurp the cognitive resources needed to consciously regulate one’s attention and behavior” (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009, p. 375). The authors propose that for those with “chronic deficits in belonging, they may think about themselves and their social lives in ways that attenuate the distress associated with these deficits of interpersonal connections” (p. 373). If repeat thoughts result in either no actions or socially detrimental actions, the cycle of not feeling belonging will continue. Further, anti-social responses, similar to anger, can result in the cycle where rumination leads to withdrawal, which in turn provides more rumination which reinforces the lack of belonging.

The tendency to repeatedly think about ostracism received from an important source appears to be a common experience. The more valued the relationship, the more likely it is that rumination will occur when that relationship is threatened (Gardner et al., 2000). This type of rumination could result in a pro-social response, as self-awareness could correct behaviour and lead to acceptance (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). However, rumination can also lead to a slower recovery from ostracism as continuing to think about the situation is not a helpful coping mechanism (Lau et al., 2009). Whether the rumination leads to a positive outcome appears to depend upon a number of other factors: social anxiety, the way events are remembered, and the degree of social withdrawal.

Social anxiety appears to have the strongest connection to rumination. It is, however, very important to note that this is within the context of the existing research, and could be largely due to the lack of research on the continually ostracized. Not

knowing how people react to on-going ostracism has a great impact on the research on rumination. For example, it would seem that one isolated instance of ostracism outside of important relationships would not lead to excessive rumination.

Two studies which focused on the socially anxious draw similar conclusions regarding rumination. First, socially anxious people took a longer time to recover from instances of ostracism (Oaten et al., 2008; Zadro et al., 2006) and this is believed to be due to the role of rumination. The longer recovery time is proposed as:

these participants might have engaged precious cognitive resources to mull over the ostracism experience and its implications...likely to reinforce and strengthen the negative beliefs socially anxious people hold about themselves. This may leave them even more sensitive to perceiving signs of rejection in future social interactions. Such a *cycle* could lead to constant and prolonged negative rumination (Oaten et al., 2008, p.499).

Zadro et al. (2006) propose the same theory, “that socially anxious individuals are more likely to ruminate about negative social encounters...there was indirect evidence for this maladaptive cognitive strategy...suggests some support for the theory that highly socially anxious people possess a biased cognitive style – one that maintains the deleterious effects of ostracism” (p. 696).

Molden et al. (2009) examine ostracism responses in relation to preventing further instances, “general motivations for safety and security” (p.417) versus promotion responses “general motivations for growth and advancement” (p.417). In a recall study, they found:

people who had been rejected reported a greater tendency to respond by withdrawing from social contact. Such withdrawal primarily represents a means of protecting oneself from further experiences of social loss (Ayduh et al., 2003) and therefore suggests the greater activation of prevention motivations....Results also indicated that social withdrawal after being rejected was not typified by attempts at distraction, but instead was more likely to involve continued rumination about what had happened (p. 421).

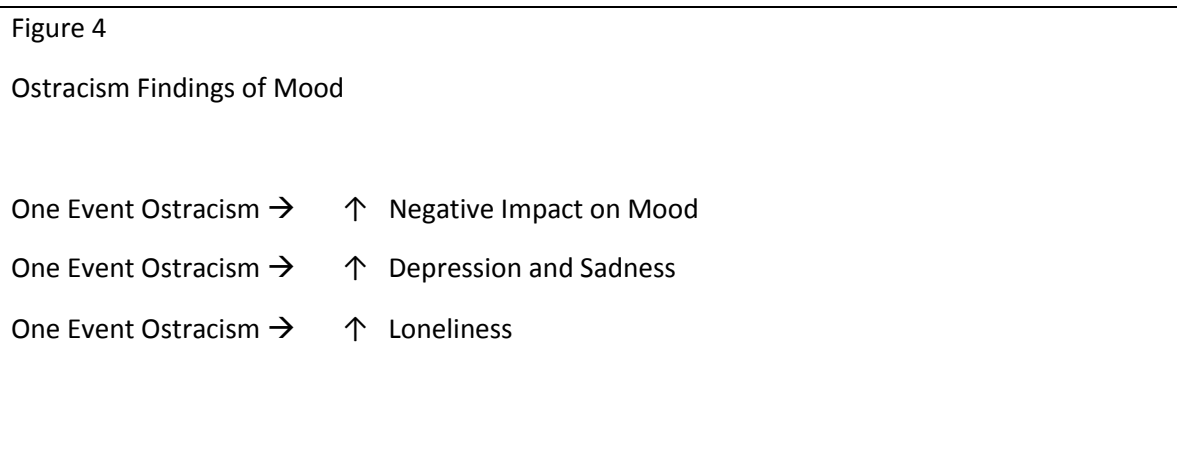
The authors also found two reasons for the rumination. For those who were rejected, the ruminations “focus on what specifically would have been necessary to avoid being rejected. These types of thoughts indicate a heightened vigilance for identifying mistakes that led to losses of social connection, and therefore suggest greater activation of prevention motivations” (p. 424).

While still ruminating, those in the study that were ignored illustrated the opposite motivation: “In contrast, people who had been ignored reported a greater tendency to think about actions that they should have taken and to focus on anything that might have been sufficient to avoid being ignored....being rejected also produces more promotion-focused representations” (p. 424).

The study highlights that these ruminations occur for both promotion and prevention motivations, however, it is the rumination related to prevention which appears to be related to continued social withdrawal, and by extension, further rumination. This is consistent with Oaten et al. (2008), providing some initial consideration for the cycle of ostracism-rumination-social withdrawal-ostracism.

Within important social contexts, it is expected that anxiety would play a greater role. The worry about treatment and relationships at work, which is connected to earning a living would seem to be expected. This study will examine the reactions when the ability to earn a living is threatened for a longer period of time. If one event ostracism is impacting anxiety and rumination, ongoing ostracism would be expected to intensify this response. The current study however will not only examine these connections, but will shed light on the cognitive processes associated with worry and assessing alternatives for action.

Mood



Mood

The one area of ostracism research which have reported the most mixed findings is that of mood, or positive and negative affect. The initial assumption was that ostracism,

like other undesirable interpersonal or group experiences, would result in a variety of negative mood states, such as sadness or depression (Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Lau et al., 2009; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009; Williams & Nida, 2011). However, some individual studies showed that mood was not affected, that there were no significant impacts on mood (for example Baumeister et al, 2002; Chow et al., 2008; DeWall & Baumeister, 2006; DeWall, Twenge, Gitter & Baumeister, 2009; Poon et al., 2013; Twenge et al., 2002; Twenge et al., 2003).

This gave rise to the theory that in order to cope with the experience of ostracism, a numbing effect occurs in order to deal with or avoid the experience of pain, or to ensure that resources were directed to coping with the situation instead of being overwhelmed with feelings (Baumeister et al, 2002; Dewall & Baumeister, 2006; Twenge et al., 2007a).

This theory that numbness occurs as a protective measure was also linked with shock responses and rejection sensitivity. Assuming that in order to cope with the surprise of the ostracism, people would shut down emotions in order to continue to function. Initially, this concept dominated much of the research on mood and ostracism.

However, while individual studies showed no impact, two meta-analyses showed a very different picture. The specific results will be discussed in the following section. In summary, they found that ostracism had a clear and negative impact on mood (Blackhart et al., 2009; Gerber & Wheeler, 2009).

Since that time, the subsequent studies on ostracism have confirmed this finding, although it is not entirely clear why the results changed so drastically after 2009. Some of the change may be due to utilizing different forms of measurement. The results on mood

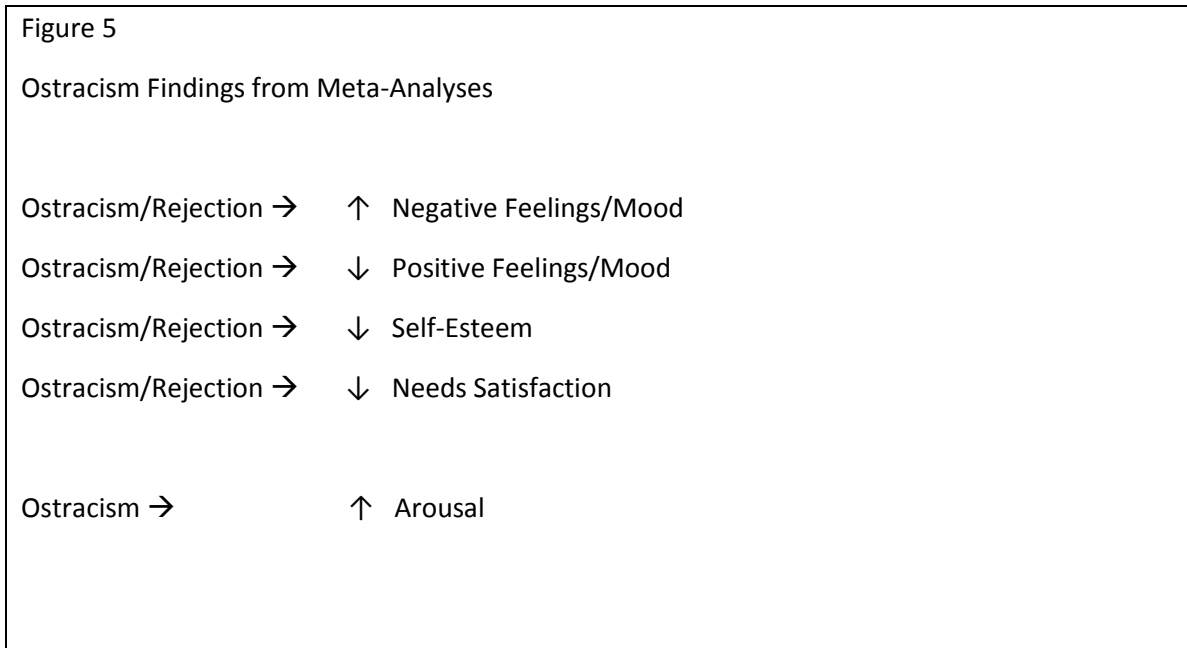
now conform with the findings of the meta-analysis: there is a significant and negative impact on mood following ostracism. Numerous studies report a lowered mood or an increased negative mood (Heeren et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2011; Keely et al., 2012; Lau et al., 2009; Molet et al., 2013; Van Beest, Williams & van Dijk, 2011; Weschke & Niedeggen, 2013; Wesselmann, Wirth, Mroczek & Williams, 2012b; Wirth & Williams, 2009). This is not to say that prior to 2009 all studies found no impact. There were studies prior to that period which reported lowered mood following ostracism (Gardner, Pickett & Brewer, 2000; Kerr et al., 2008; Smith & Williams, 2004; Williams et al., 2000).

Following the results of the meta-analyses, specific negative emotions received attention. It should be noted that anger and anxiety will not be included as a separate summary exists for both of these emotions. When examining the impact of ostracism on depression and/or sadness, the results have been consistent, and show increased negative results (DeWall, Gilman, Sharif, Carboni & Rice, 2012; DeWall, Twenge, Koole, Baumeister, Marquez & Reid, 2011; Hutchinson et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2009). As well, the same finding exists for loneliness (Stillman et al., 2009; Wesselmann et al., 2012b).

While the results on mood show consistent negative impacts, it should be noted that these are all acute measures of experimentally induced ostracism. The impact of persistent ostracism on mood, and the impacts on other emotions remains unknown. As well, similar to anxiety and rumination, the ongoing experiences of ostracism may result in a different impacts on mood. The interviews of lived experience will also allow for the

participants to define and label their own moods, which should add an additional emotional component not currently collected by the survey tools.

Meta-Analysis Findings



Meta-Analysis Findings

Both meta-analyses utilize the term rejection in their studies. As a result, there are studies that are included in their samples that are not included in the review of ostracism literature. Blackhart et al. (2009) uses social exclusion as the definition for the concept being examined in the 192 study meta-analysis, although research on rejection, being left out, and ostracism is included. Ostracism is viewed as a form of social exclusion, and while it is included, some of the specific impacts are not discussed. The

meta-analysis focuses on measures of emotion, self-esteem, and the type of exclusion, including relationship with the excluder. They have found that:

Rejected participants have consistently reported less positive and more negative feelings than participants in acceptance conditions – but they were not, on the whole, feeling bad, at least in terms of the literal meaning of their self-reports...rejection causes a shift in emotional state away from the positive and toward the negative, but the shift ends in a neutral or mildly positive state. There was no definite evidence of any actual emotional distress among rejected persons (p.295).

These results are similar to Gerber & Wheeler (2009) who also found that there was a negative impact on mood, and that the previous assumption related to numbing to not correct: “Direct inductions of rejection, however, do lead to worse mood. The flattening of affect predicted by the numbness hypothesis was not found; instead, rejection causes a unipolar shift toward feeling worse: positive mood decreases and negative mood increases” (p. 479).

They also found a difference in affect when considering the type of experiment, and that when asked to recall a situation in their life where they had been rejected, this form of inducing rejection showed the strongest responses, “...implying that participants experienced greater negative affect when they had just imagined a rejection experience than when they had actually been rejected by others” (Blackhart et al., 2009, p.296).

This was also true for self-esteem, that remembering past situations produced a much larger negative impact than other means of inducing rejection. Very importantly:

The difference between reliving past rejection and rejection priming is quite striking, with the latter having roughly zero effect on self-esteem whereas the former had a large one. Reliving a past rejection experience probably encourages participants to recall an especially vivid and impactful occasion, and moreover, it enables the measures to encompass changes in self-esteem that may have been delayed, unlike the other procedures (Blackhart et al., 2009, p. 297).

This is again confirmed by Gerber & Wheeler (2009) "...self-esteem is lowered by rejection. Rejection not only worsens one's mood, it makes one feel bad about who he or she is as a person. People are more likely to feel worthless and incompetent following rejection" (p. 480).

Need satisfaction was also included in the Gerber & Wheeler (2009) study. Not surprisingly, they found that there were significant impacts on both belonging and control needs, and as with previously discussed studies, which need satisfaction dominates determines whether or not the resulting behaviour is viewed as re-establishing the relationship or seeking to re-establish an aspect of control.

Finally, the act of ostracism is addressed, as Gerber & Wheeler (2009) found "Ostracism is sometimes considered a severe form of rejection, and this study found some evidence for its pre-eminence in rejection paradigms. Ostracism increases arousal, unlike any of the other rejection paradigms" (p. 481).

This raises many questions for examining the real life situations of ostracism, as different results and outcomes are found depending upon the way ostracism is induced. It appears the real life situations show stronger negative outcomes for individuals. It would

therefore be expected that for those individuals who experience repeat ostracism, that the impacts would have additional consequences. Blackhart et al. (2009) encourages that “these data also lend weight to the view that there is value in studying actual behavior and actual reactions, rather than relying on hypothetical or imaginary scenarios as has become increasingly common in recent years” (p. 301-302).

The need for additional forms of ostracism research is also proposed by others who are examining models of ostracism:

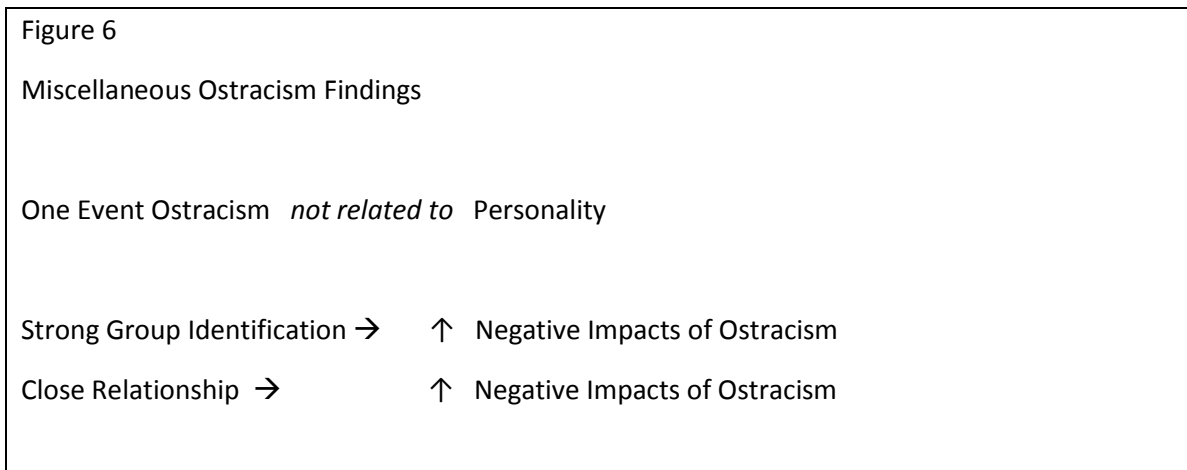
evidence suggests that chronic deprivation of belonging leads to prolonged negative affect (particularly depression, loneliness, and anger) and negative physical health outcomes either directly through chronic activation of stress responses or through behaviors that increase the risk for health problems. Given that failure to deal successfully with rejection has long-term psychological and physical consequences, research is needed to understand factors that influence the temporal trajectory of coping with rejection for both theoretical and clinical reasons” (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009, p. 379).

The same perspective is supported for the Williams’ (1997) model of ostracism, “...but I suspect that the more important impacts derives from its relationship to two other time-related factors: chronic versus discrete experiences, and the amount of time and opportunity for coping and repair” (Brewer, 2005, p. 343).

It will be this significant gap that the current study addresses. Changing the focus from one event ostracism to an ongoing experience situated in an important social arena may present additional consequences not considered within the current research. As well,

the study of persistent ostracism offers additional opportunities to study how relationships are restored and how individuals cope with multiple events of ostracism.

Miscellaneous Findings



Miscellaneous Findings

There have been other aspects of ostracism that have appeared in only a few studies which should also be mentioned as they are components that the current study may be able to make contributions to as a different methodology is utilized.

Research on ostracism and personality has sought to try to understand if there are certain identifiable personality types or traits which make a person more susceptible to ostracism. There does not appear to be such an identifier. “These largely null findings for personality are consistent with the notion that the experience of ostracism reflects a *strong situation*, that is, an event that produces similar affective and behavioral responses

across individuals regardless of their personalities” (McDonald & Donnellan, 2012, p.614). Williams (2007a) reports that:

“...although previous research has not found moderation by introversion – extroversion, individualism – collectivism, need for belonging, and loneliness, individuals high on particular traits like these or others (self-esteem, rejection sensitivity, narcissism, and attachment style, to name a few) may certainly cope differently once the pain is detected” (p.439).

McDonald & Donnellan (2012) examined personality as a moderate and a main effect. They used The Big Five as the basis for measurement. “To test whether personality traits moderate the effects of ostracism....Five were statistically significant: agreeableness, self-esteem, impulsive antisociality, grandiose exhibitionism, and the second facet of agreeableness...labeled mortality....The Cluster A personality disorder profiles did not produce any significant interactions” (p.616).

Therefore they conclude that “We did not find widespread support for the idea that personality attributes are related to individual’s reactions to ostracism. Rather, the five significant interactions indicated that effects of personality evident in the control condition were attenuated in the exclusion condition” (p.617).

The ‘Ostracism in Everyday Life’ study examined personality traits and only found one result: “more neurotic people reacted more negatively to ostracism than less neurotic people” (Nezlek et al., 2012, p.98).

The lack of findings related to personality may be due to, as described by McDonald & Donnellan (2012), ostracism being so contrary to the needs of human

beings, that it is impactful to everyone, and not necessarily a result of someone's personality.

Besides personality, there are group dynamics which have received some limited attention within the laboratory research. This is far more difficult to study in a quantitative manner. All of the following consequences will be addressed within the current study. As will be discussed in the Methodology chapter, the lived experiences are a natural fit for studying the realities of social interactions.

The connection or the value that is assigned to a group impacts the experience of ostracism. Whether the group is distinguished by race, political affiliation or other essential factors, being excluded from a group that the individual had a strong identification with (an in-group) was much more impactful than being excluded by a less important or less valued group (an out-group) (Bernstein et al., 2010; Goodwin, Williams & Carter-Sowell, 2010; Sacco, Bernstein, Young & Hugenberg, 2014). This is of importance for the study of workplace ostracism as for most employees, colleagues and co-workers would form an important and valued in-group. Additionally, we know that social connections within the workplace impact individuals in a multitude of ways and that strains to those relationships affect both workers and organizations (William, 2007a; Zhao et al., 2013b) as the workplace is a very important social setting.

The closeness of the relationship impacts how ostracism is both perceived and experienced. The closer the relationship, the greater the negative consequences, whether they are emotional, needs based, or physical (Blackhart et al., 2009; Gerber & Wheeler, 2009; Maier-Rigaud et al., 2010; Nezelek et al., 2012; Williams & Nida, 2011). Within a

workplace, especially in situations of close quarters, high task interdependence, group decision making, team-based structures or where tenure is high, it would be expected that the relationships would be closer and therefore the impacts more serious. Further, when combined with the in-group/out-group research, the impacts, especially for on-going situations in a group context, could be devastating, both personally and to a career. The role that ostracism plays with regard to future job opportunities is unknown. However, with workplaces demanding co-operation and collaboration as part of the required competences for performance, ostracism would be expected to have deleterious effects.

An additional concern was the finding that by ostracizing one member of a group, the cohesion with the remaining group members increased (Zadro et al., 2005). This is extremely concerning for workplaces, as it provides motivation for other co-workers to ‘side with’ the source of ostracism rather than support the target. As well, when witnessing others being ostracized, and when the observer felt the ostracism was deserved, the pleasure centers in the brain were activated (Wesselmann, Williams & Hales, 2013). This lends further motivation to join in ostracizing behaviours. Fourth, there is great power in face-to-face ostracism. The effects of seeing the body language and facial expressions of others appears to be very impactful, much more so than non face-to-face measures, although this research is also limited (Godwin et al., 2014; Goodacre & Zadro, 2010). It would be expected that within the workplace, this would be the case, as not only would there be face-to-face contact when the person was ostracized, but also in subsequent workplace interactions.

Taken together, these preliminary investigations which largely center on group dynamics, provide indications of both the power, and the complexity of workplace ostracism, which are also areas of exploration within the current study.

Workplace Ostracism

The research on workplace ostracism is of particular interest for this study, as the main purpose is to uncover what the lived experience of workplace ostracism is like for those who have chronic or long-standing exposure. To date, there have been very few studies of employees and workplaces which examine ostracism. However, the research that has been published is beginning to address the specific consequences within the work environment.

Appendix B presents a chart which outlines all of the workplace based studies. This chart identifies the method of invoking ostracism, the format of the study, the participants and the findings. It also identifies the topics studied.

The remaining part of this chapter will first present a summary of the workplace ostracism findings. As mentioned, the details of each study are in the chart in Appendix B. This section will briefly outline the factors that have been studied. That will be followed with a more lengthy description of the issues with the current research, and the gaps associated. This will form the rationalization for the current study.

Figure 7

Workplace Ostracism Findings

Workplace Ostracism →	↓	Organizational Commitment
Workplace Ostracism →	↓	Organizational Citizenship
Workplace Ostracism →	↓	Work Satisfaction and Performance
Workplace Ostracism →	↓	Self-Esteem
Workplace Ostracism →	↑	Anxiety
Workplace Ostracism →	↓	Well-Being
Workplace Ostracism →	↓	Helping Behaviours
Workplace Ostracism →	↑	Counterproductive Work Behaviours

Workplace Ostracism

For both research collected in North America (individualist culture) and China (collectivist culture), it is clear that the impacts of workplace ostracism are negative, as are the impacts on both workplace and individual outcomes.

Consistently, workplace ostracism led to a decrease in organizational commitment, (Ferris et al., 2008; Hitlan et al., 2006b), a decrease in organizational citizenship behaviours (Balliet & Ferris, 2013; Chung, 2015; Ferris et al., 2008; Ferris et al., 2015; Hitlan et al., 2006b; Wu et al., 2015; Yan et al., 2014), a decrease in satisfaction and performance, either related to work colleagues, the job itself or family satisfaction (Ferris et al., 2008; Hitlan et al., 2006a; Leung et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2013; Mok & De Cremer, 2016), a decrease in self-esteem (Ferris et al., 2015; Hitlan et al., 2006a; Wu et al., 2011), an increase in negative experiences such as prejudice, well-

being, neuroticism, depressed mood, job tension, emotional exhaustion, work-family conflict, and anxiety (Chung, 2015; Ferris et al., 2008; Hitlan et al., 2006a; Hitlan et al., 2006b; Hitlan et al., 2009; Leung et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2013; Wu et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2012) and a host of other undesirable or anti-social workplace behaviours such as increased deviant and counterproductive behaviours and a decrease in helping behaviours and agreeableness (Balliet & Ferris, 2013; Chung, 2015; Ferris et al., 2008; Ferris et al., 2015; Hitlan et al., 2009; Leung et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2011; Zhao et al., 2013b). It appears to be clear that workplace ostracism is not good for targets or organizations.

There were also some possible coping behaviours and personality traits that were identified as contributing to less drastic outcomes. Agreeableness, possessing ingratiation and political skill, being open to new experiences, having a future orientation, high levels of work engagement and the ability to separate work and home life seem to be possible areas to explore for either reducing the impacts of workplace ostracism, or as an area employees could be helped to develop as a coping mechanism (Balliet & Ferris, 2013; Ferris et al., 2013; Hitlan et al., 2009; Leung et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2013; Robinson et al., 2013; Wu et al., 2012; Zhao et al., 2013b).

However, with only fourteen studies to draw from, it is obvious that the area of workplace ostracism is ripe for exploration. Further, very few methods have been used to study workplace ostracism, and to date the majority of the research focuses on a one time measure utilizing the Workplace Ostracism Scale or Workplace Exclusion Scale. Similar to other research on ostracism, most of the experiences are measured by a scale which describes components of behaviour. This has allowed for the exploration of workplace

specific considerations. The existing study will both build on the current workplace research to make new and novel contributions. As previously mentioned, social events benefit from being studied from a social perspective. One of the main goals of the current research is to understand not only how ostracism at work impacts work performance and organizational outcomes, but also to understand the process by which it occurs, is maintained and how it can be disrupted. The interviews with those who have experienced persistent workplace ostracism will allow for the inter-relationships, cognitions, behaviours and emotions to be studied within context.

2.4 Summary of Gaps within the Current Literature

Two distinct weaknesses exist within the current knowledge of ostracism, and specifically workplace ostracism. These constraints are linked with the experimental nature of the research. As the vast majority of all ostracism research is experiment-based, this not only limits the study outcomes but may create biases that are unknown due to the lack of other methodologies. Further, the experiment assumes that there is transference to real-life situations, which at this point has not been substantiated.

As a result of experimental and therefore positivist stance of the research, the perspective of lived experience is missing. For the majority of the research, only acute responses are measured, and a set of select tools, assumed to best capture the experience of ostracism are considered. Consequently, studies reinforce each other as similar tools are used to quantify similar outcomes. To date, these measures have been strongly

dominated by needs satisfaction, mood, re-integration and anti-social responses. Given the possible range of human responses, our knowledge to date has been constrained by the assumption that these factors can be identified and measured, and that people will respond consistently. However, the value of continuing to study one-event ostracism with a computerized stranger will reach saturation, if it has not already. Perhaps the very recent expansion into O-Cam and workplace surveys represents the need for other ways to study ostracism. However, as these methods do consider some important factors previously excluded or neglected, such as face-to-face responses and examining ostracism at work, they also possess the same inherent limitations. While the experience of ostracism may have specific outcomes when occurring in similar situations to the experiments, most of these situations do not naturally translate into real-life. Further, the one study which examined real-life ostracism found that isolated, one-time incidents with strangers were the least impactful (Nezlek et al., 2012). The situations that were the most problematic, as would be expected, were those which involved close and significant relationships.

The second distinct weakness is that within experiments, there is no context. Not only are the relationships largely irrelevant, but the situation in which the ostracism is being induced is also not relevant. There are no pre-existing relationships, stressors, or commitments. The experiments assume that a pre-post measure of emotion represents the impact of ostracism. However, this lack of context fails to replicate the value of the situation to the individual. Those in the experiment do not have to continue interactions or have a history with those involved. There are no consequences (presumably) outside of the acute measures. It is assumed that discontinuing the experiment and debriefing

participants reduces the majority of the negative consequences. In no way does this represent the implications of ostracism which occurs in an important or vital relationship.

This need for additional forms of ostracism research is also proposed by others who are examining models of ostracism:

...evidence suggests that chronic deprivation of belonging leads to prolonged negative affect (particularly depression, loneliness, and anger) and negative physical health outcomes either directly through chronic activation of stress responses or through behaviors that increase the risk for health problems. Given that failure to deal successfully with rejection has long-term psychological and physical consequences, research is needed to understand factors that influence the temporal trajectory of coping with rejection for both theoretical and clinical reasons (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009, p. 379).

The same perspective is supported for the Williams (1997) model of ostracism, "...but I suspect that the more important impact derives from its relationship to two other time-related factors: chronic versus discrete experiences, and the amount of time and opportunity for coping and repair" (Brewer, 2005, p. 343).

As with any experiment-based research, there are common disadvantages, which certainly apply within the study of ostracism. These would include: the artificial situation in which ostracism is induced; predominantly student-based participant pools; restricted measures of outcomes or consequences which confine responses to pre-established scales; the nature of the relationship in the majority of the studies being an unknown/stranger; the ability to study only acute effects; and lack of context.

Much of the workplace-based literature has similar issues: measures of ostracism are conducted at one point in time and only certain experiences, as defined by the scale, are captured. The nature of the relationships and the context of the work environments are not known. Further, while some of the emotional or needs based impacts may be captured, there are many more that are not mentioned: impact on career, physical and mental health, ability to re-establish thwarted needs, the role of attribution and whether or not specific coping, re-integration or withdrawal strategies impact individual and workplace outcomes. Certainly the existing literature provides some possible clues as to areas that could be explored, but they also highlight how inadequate the research has been to date, largely due to the disconnected methods in which this phenomena is studied. Human reactions of social situation cannot be represented within a laboratory. The experience of repeatedly being ostracized by an important relationship or group is not comparable to the re-creations which have formed the basis of the studies to date. The value of the relationship is an essential factor within workplace ostracism, as the context interacts with the consequences.

The lived experience of ostracism is an essential aspect which is largely absent. Other researchers, as previously discussed, have raised two vital questions: what happens in situations of persistent ostracism, and how do these experiences translate into people's lives? (Nezlek et al., 2012). These are fundamental questions to be addressed within this study.

One of the other areas which has been identified but not explored is related to coping with and resolving workplace ostracism. To date there have been no studies which

examine how people determine which strategies to employ, and which are restricted either by the workplace setting, opportunity or efficacy. For the organization and individual, these are fundamental questions which need to be explored (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). Drawing from the experiences of bullying and discrimination in the workplace, it is obvious that a policy does not address the problem, nor is it the primary way of addressing issues, as illustrated by the extremely low usage rates (Vickers, 2012).

Further, if the source of the ostracism is or was considered to be part of the individuals' support system – as we may expect with co-workers and/or supervisors – how does this double-jeopardy situation impact targets of ostracism, both in and outside of work.

The importance of the workplace as a social setting cannot be dismissed. Each workplace would have different cultures and norms, and as a result, behaviours in one may not translate to another. This environmental context is vital, as is the relationship context, both group and individual, in which ostracism occurs. Not only socially is this important, but the need satisfaction provided by the workplace must also be considered.

However, as the workplace may provide for aspects of these needs, it also provides others, mainly related to survival and security. The financial role that workplaces play in the lives of individuals cannot be minimized. On-going job security, compensation and benefits could be threatened with workplace ostracism. This raises questions related to other physical and emotional consequences. To date, studies have not examined factors such as fear. While helplessness has been identified as a possible outcome, it has not been explored within the context of the workplace. The same holds

true for self-preservation. Expanding into the context of the workplaces raises additional concerns for outcomes such as anxiety, rumination, withdrawal and depression. When workplace ostracism threatens survival needs, there may be other consequences that have not yet been considered. This example reinforces the need to study ostracism with context - of both the workplace and the life of the target. Understanding how the target perceives threats and responses is essential to a complete understanding of this phenomena. The individual and the experiences cannot be separated from the context.

This summary has provided an overview of all of the existing research on ostracism. The general findings related to being ostracized were presented, and then the specific workplace outcomes were discussed. This chapter provided a basic understanding of some of the key concepts studied in relation to ostracism, with a focus on how this study will address some of the shortfalls. The chapter has ended with a summary of the gaps within the existing research, which are presented as a rationale for the current study.

The following chapter, Theoretical Framework, will move from the current research into the proposed study, by presenting the foundations on which this study is based: social constructionism, power, and reflexivity. These theoretical positions will inform the Methodology for the study.

CHAPTER 3 – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The first chapter presented a brief overview of this study. Then, the current research on ostracism and workplace ostracism was reviewed, which established the gaps within the research, based upon both findings and methods. This chapter will establish the theoretical framework on which the current research is based. The main theoretical framework, Social Constructionism, presents the ontology which informs the approach utilized. The description of social constructionism will be linked with the study of persistent workplace ostracism. This framework is coupled with another theoretical base, related to Power. Power will be considered as the second theoretical framework, however the separation of social constructionism and power is not desired given the context of this study. Therefore power will be presented within the social constructionism frame. Also included is a discussion of the relationship between power and giving voice, which is also related to social constructionism. Finally, a description of reflexivity as a key framework of this study is presented. Again, while this concept is closely related to social constructionism, it also provides an independent contribution to epistemology. All of these theoretical frames work together and guide the process of collecting and interpreting the lived experiences.

3.1 Social Constructionism

The majority of the writings on social constructionism as a theoretical stance

came from psychology (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2001b; Gergen, 1994). However, this ontological approach has been utilized within other disciplines. In business research, this approach has been used, for example, to explore leadership (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010; Grint, 2005). Social constructionism has been suggested as an approach in which “context is not independent of human agency, and cannot be objectively assessed in a scientific form” (Grint, 2005, p.1471). This approach is also appropriate when “...truth is located within particular communities of science” (Gergen, 2010, p.262). These two aspects are a good fit with workplace ostracism, first as it is expected that the impacts, experience and outcomes will be very situation-specific; and second, as there may well be more than one ‘truth’ when it comes to this complex experience. When looking at an experience that has the potential not only to impact basic human needs, but also survival needs, more than one reality or competing realities may be likely. As workplace ostracism can potentially threaten personal belief-based factors, such as self-esteem, employment and the ability to earn a living, the responses and outcomes can be expected to fit with the concept of multiple ‘truths’.

Social constructionism purports “...that reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the processes in which this occurs.” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.1). This provides for the basic framework of social constructionism as a theoretical orientation. It requires:

that we take a critical stance toward our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world, including ourselves. It invites us to be critical of the idea that our observations of the world unproblematically yield its nature to us, to challenge

the view that the conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world...Social constructionism cautions us to be ever suspicious of our assumptions about how the world appears to be (Burr, 2003, p. 2-3).

Burr (2003) continues by explaining that reality, and the nature of reality, is not something that is fixed or consistent. Rather, “it is through the daily interactions between people in the course of social life that our versions of knowledge become fabricated...The going-ons between people in the course of their everyday lives are seen as the practices during which our shared versions of knowledge are constructed” (p.4).

This perspective is relevant for exploring workplace ostracism as it is the interactions between people at work which would create the experience of being left-out or ignored. Also of importance is the context in which this occurs. How these situations are created and maintained are of particular interest, as these interactions also inform the range of responses. This shared knowledge represents the shared reality, as well as shared limits. These limits are also socially constructed, and impact what range of options are available for changing or acting within the given situation or context (Berger & Luckman, 1966; van Dijk, 1997).

This has important implications for responding to workplace ostracism. One of the goals for exploring a more in-depth understanding of the lived experience of workplace ostracism is to also understand the potential ways in which organizations and individuals could address, or cope with, this situation. In order to effectively address the alternatives, the boundaries in which the situation exists must be understood. “To the extent that our constructions of the world are founded upon language,...then language

underpins the forms of action that it is possible for us to take” (Burr, 2003, p.61).

This way of understanding and approaching workplace ostracism is essential as the traditional ways of knowing do not seem to offer concrete options for improving the situation. In contrast, when examining the literature and ‘success’ of dealing with other socially constructed issues, it becomes evident that the traditional, positivist methods are not yielding the outcomes that would be desired. As the research on bullying has increased, there has yet to be effective responses clearly identified (Vickers, 2012). This could be due to the socially constructed nature of the experience, as the context is created, it also co-creates alternatives and limitations: “a pre-structured reality with which we are confronted, and sets of affordances and limitations on processes” (Fairclough, 2005, p. 923). Without fully understanding the ways in which the knowledge is created, we cannot know the alternatives.

Another key aspect of social constructionism is related to language, as this largely represents the way in which meanings are both communicated and constructed. “Most social constructionists adhere to the belief that language does not mirror reality; rather it constitutes it” (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010, p.174).

This represents the common view that language is an essential aspect of understanding knowledge formation from a social constructionist perspective. It is language which provides meaning through social interactions. The meanings are therefore not formed passively, but actively through ongoing human action, interaction and, in its many forms, discourse (Burr, 2003; Wodak & Fairclough, 1997; Wortham, 2001). These constructions of meaning are also contextually bound, resulting in meanings having connections to communities, including communities of practice

(Hibberd, 2005; Mumby & Clair, 1997).

One of the reasons social constructionism was selected as the theoretical base of this study was because it allows the experience of the individual to be recognized not only as a unique experience, set in a particular context, but also because it allows for the exploration of the social factors which shape the situation (Miller & Holstein, 1993; van Dijk, 1997; Wodak & Fairclough, 1997). By recognizing that the social nature of the interactions not only influences the outcomes, but constructs the actual experience, it is possible to uncover a more extensive understanding of the phenomena (Cunliffe, 2008; Grint, 2005). It will allow further understanding of how individuals have attempted to cope within these difficult and perhaps threatening situations of workplace ostracism.

The current positivist literature measures of outcomes provides only that – outcomes. For example, the use of the workplace ostracism scale and related measures (such as self-esteem, belongingness or productivity), provide a formulistic picture: individual + workplace ostracism = poor performance and lowered self-esteem. It does not provide the types of information that would allow for the identification of potential interventions, or for understanding the process by which, for example, production decreases (if it does). Unknowns include how the individual interpreted the event, how the event relates to past experiences, how the individual tried to cope, rectify and/or, respond to the situation, how the workplace ostracism influences performance, and so forth. Further, the positivist view allows for classifications of workplace ostracism by a limited number of behaviours (for example; the WOS has 10 items) by frequency (for example, occasionally, rarely), which also seriously limits the understanding of the actual

experience and how it is socially constructed between individuals (Cunliffe, 2008; Gergen, 1994).

Social constructionism will allow for the collection of information related to risk, intensity, sources, interpretation, meaning, response, and other factors which are all contextually bound and have significant impacts on both alternatives, actions and outcomes. This not only considers the local context, but also the organizational and cultural constraints (Cunliffe, 2008; Holstein & Miller, 1993; Mumby & Clair, 1997). These factors "...neither predict nor determine individual outcomes, they provide orientations and resources that generally distinguish the interpretation process in one circumstance from that of another" (Holstein & Miller, 1993, p. 168).

Therefore the socially constructed nature of the experience not only provides insight into the specific context, but can also highlight differences between experiences (Gergen, 2010). These differences can be vital if a more complete understanding of a social phenomena is to be captured. Using the methods of 'natural science' to study 'problems' which are social in nature, as the widely accepted definition, or dominant discourse related to the social issue must be reduced to a single understanding (Bogen & Lynch, 1993; Gergen, 2001a). Therefore this research strives not to create a common sense understanding of workplace ostracism, but rather a sociological view of a complex social problem (Bogen & Lynch, 1993; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010; Hibberd, 2005).

Berger & Luckman (1966) challenge the idea of one reality or truth:

Commonsense contains innumerable pre- and quasi-scientific interpretations about everyday reality, which it takes for granted. If we are to describe the reality of commonsense we must refer to these interpretations, just as we must take account of its taken-for-granted character- but we do so within phenomenological brackets (p. 20).

Further, they contrast this with the sociological view of how experience and knowing comes to be:

I encounter knowledge in everyday life as socially distributed, that is, as possessed differently by different individuals and types of individuals. I do not share my knowledge equally with all my fellowmen, and there may be some knowledge I share with no one...The social distribution of knowledge of certain elements of everyday reality can become highly complex and even confusing to the outsider (p.46).

However, the differences are not to say that one perspective or experience is more valid than other, even if it is more common. Rather, instead of trying to develop an 'accurate' or 'true' view of workplace ostracism, the goal is to develop a more comprehensive understanding of both the experience and the factors which contribute to, restrain and impact the phenomena (Burr, 2003; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010; Gergen, 2001a). As such, "Constructionist discourse often functions in the reverse: it is a liberating agent, challenging the taken-for-granted and opening new realms of comprehension and action" (Gergen, 2001a, p. 16).

This requires a challenge to the commonplace or assumed nature of ‘truth’. “This goes to the ontological and epistemological assumption of social constructionism that notions such as “reality” and “being” are relationally -, socially -, culturally-, discursively-, mediated phenomena” (Noble & McIlveen, 2012, p.106).

3.2 Power

It is recognized that studying a social phenomena without addressing power relations avoids a key component for understanding behaviour (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010; van Dijk, 2012). Power is intertwined within organizations and business practices to the point where they cannot be separated. Therefore, when examining workplace-centered behaviours such as ostracism, power must be considered as an essential aspect of context.

Power, within workplace interactions, is often invisible. This same type of invisibility can also exist with workplace ostracism. This section will examine both the power context from a sociological perspective and the power associated with giving voice.

Locations of Power

Marx and Engel’s (1977) describe a perspective of power which comes from a social basis. “For them, the dominant ideas of society are based on and perpetuate the

interests, concerns, and assumptions of powerful groups. This is so because one aspect of social dominance is control over the institutions and processes through which knowledge is produced and disseminated” (Miller, G., 1993, p.259).

This power description is very relevant to the exploration of workplace ostracism. Those who are ostracized are not part of the ‘powerful groups’. Not only are there situations of ostracism which remove people from groups, it may also remove individuals from knowledge. Within organizations, this can present a number of power-based issues. The individual who is being ostracized may become, or believe they are, without power. Further, the organizational context, also socially created and maintained, will strive to restrict or dictate which behaviours or responses will be socially supported, and which are not available (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010; Holstein & Miller, 1993a; Miller, G., 1993).

Not only are social problems representations organizationally produced and preferred models for interpretation, but their use is conditioned by prevailing local preferences, practices and resources....each setting has its available resources, institutionalized procedures, and practical discourses for dealing with matters they routinely encounter. While the contexts neither predict nor determine individual outcomes, they provide orientations and resources that generally distinguish the interpretation process in one circumstance from that in another. Studies of social problems work therefore consider the practical contingencies and discursive and interactional structures that characterize the contexts within which the work takes place (Holstein & Miller, 1993, p.168-169).

The dominant discourse, or organizational discourse would also be a representation of power. “A claim relies on an authoritative discourse to give it moral and political force *as a claim*” (Miller, L. J., 1993, p.359). Burr (1998) reminds that “part of the power of social constructionist accounts is that they deconstruct categories and classifications and urge us to recognize the diversity, fragmentariness and localness of experience and subjectivity” (p. 17).

These discourses represent two types of power: “The capacity of powerful dominant discourses to ward off or preclude challenges to their fundamental assumptions or categories, and to conceal their exclusionary practices, is a favorite theme of Foucault’s” (Miller, L. J., 1993, p. 360).

Foucault (1980) questions how power can be exercised in a way that is not oppressive. He also links the idea of ‘having’ power and the discourse of truth claims, stating that the dominant discourse, as a result of ‘having’ power, results in the privileging of certain ‘truth’ claims:

What it really does is to entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects (p. 83).

He also links the idea that those who ‘have’ power, as a result of the discourse, end up representing the ‘truth’ because they are controlling the concept of ‘right’: “...that this power produces and transmits and which in their turn reproduces this power. Hence

we have a triangle: power, right, truth” (p.93).

This type of power, without ever questioning, automatically assigns power to those within one group while effectively silencing the other: “And that ideological forces work to sustain inequalities and protect the interests of powerful groups within society” (Woffitt, 2005, p. 155). The dominant organizational discourse is powerful in itself, in determining what is or is not discussed. Social constructionism allows for the voices that do not ‘have’ power, or who socially are unable or unwilling to exercise power to become heard (Cunliffe, 2008; Gergen, 2001a).

As summarized by Burr (2003), power and discourse and knowledge are interrelated and dependent:

For Foucault, knowledge, the particular common-sense view of the world prevailing in a culture at any one time, is intimately bound up with power. Any version of an event brings with it the potential for social practices, for acting in one way rather than another, and for marginalizing alternative ways of acting... What it is possible for one person to do to another, under what rights and obligations, is given by the version of events currently taken as knowledge. Therefore the power to act in particular ways, to claim resources, to control or be controlled depends upon knowledges currently prevailing in a society... Foucault therefore does not see power as some form of possession, which some people have and others don't, but as an effect of discourse. To define the world or a person in such a way that allows you to do the things you want is to exercise power. When we define or represent something in a particular way we are producing a particular form of knowledge, which brings power with it... Given

that there are always a number of discourses surrounding an event, each offering an alternative view, each bringing with it different possibilities for action, it follows that the dominant or prevailing discourses, or common sense, is continually subject to contestation and resistance. For Foucault, power and resistance are two sides of the same coin (p. 68-69).

Social constructionism therefore provides not only the opportunity for other, non-dominant discourses to be heard, but in the act itself of providing an opportunity for voice, there may also be an opportunity for action, or as positioned by Foucault, for resistance. As alternatives for action and coping with workplace ostracism are contextually bound, they are also bound by what Foucault (1980) calls knowledge/power:

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain....Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization....They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application (p. 98).

Opportunity for Voice

Social constructionism also allows for recognition of those groups who are viewed by others as lacking power – those who are marginalized. By providing an opportunity for voice, “...it is through this means that otherwise marginalized groups acquire confidence in their own positions” (Wortham, 2001, p. 133).

The dominant discourse affects marginalized groups, resulting in self-blaming,

which is common. “Real social problems are also made invisible and/or distorted by the official languages used...” (Miller, G., 1993, p. 260). As a result, the lived experiences of those who are oppressed are not heard. Social constructionism attempts to empower individuals by providing a space for them to make public, or give voice, to their lived experiences. “Thus, narratives are useful for countering social scientific analyses that treat members of marginalized groups as anonymous and homogeneous, and as victims who are without the resources needed to properly manage their lives” (Miller, G., 1993, p.262).

This therefore reduces the invisibility and the silence that are associated not only with social problems within organizations, but specifically to workplace ostracism. The role of organization context, discourse and power are all intricately connected. Utilizing a social constructionist standpoint which considers locations of power will provide voice and recognition to those who have not been visible in the past. Further, this is one of very few ways to get to understand the lived experience of workplace ostracism, as there would be other forms of ‘organizational power’ which would continue to silence those who resist the dominant discourse.

3.3 Reflexivity

The final theoretical consideration is that of the degree of reflexivity. Reflexivity in the context of social constructionism refers to the researcher being aware that their context also influences the research. As a result, “They need to be sensitive to how their research is being influenced by their own social background, preferences, and the

circumstances under which the research is to take place” (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010, p.196). This asks the researcher to “...examine our fundamental assumptions, values, ways of interacting and how these affect other people. It means thinking more critically about ourselves, our actions, the types of conversations we engage in, the language we use and how to carry out conversations in which (to some degree) shared understandings of organization experience allow possibilities for action to emerge” (Cunliffe, 2008, p. 135).

By challenging their own assumptions and positions, the researcher attempts to recognize biases in order to provide a more accurate reflection of the participants’ experience (Rubin & Rubin, 2012):

Critical inquiry first invites an appropriate humility. It functions to curb the presumptuous claims to unbridled generality, truth beyond culture and history, and fact without interpretation...Simultaneously, such critiques function as a continuous invitation...to avoid the blinders of the singular explanation and to expand the range of interpretive possibilities (Gergen, 2001b, p.32).

This understanding is essential to social construction as it relates not only to the ‘truth’ claims, but also to power. This form of inquiry allows not only for different voices and perspectives, but also for a variety of interpretations. In particular, it is a valuable consideration for groups who have been marginalized or silenced. This fits well with concepts of workplace ostracism as one of the primary functions or goals of ostracism is often isolating and silencing. Not only does this provide voice, but

opens what can be a precious space for reflection, reconsideration and possible reconstruction. Herein lies an enormous emancipatory potential, granting us a

capacity to step outside the taken-for-granted and to break loose from the sometimes strangulating grip of the commonplace. And herein lies the possibility for new futures as we are invited to consider possibilities for reconstruction. We are prompted to explore alternative understandings of ‘what is the case’, and to locate meanings that enable us to go on in more adequate ways (Gergen, 2001a, p.7).

Not only does the researcher need to be aware of their role within the research process, but historically, the views of the researcher were considered to be more important or valid than those who participated in the research. Within a social constructionist framework, the researcher must acknowledge this power imbalance and find a way to ensure that one ‘voice’ is not privileged over another:

If the scientist’s or researcher’s account of a phenomenon is seen as ‘fact’ as a result of the warranting voice of silence, we must then acknowledge that other accounts, for example the accounts of respondents in interviews, must be equally valid in principle. There no longer appears to be a good reason to privilege the account or reading of the researcher above that of anyone else, and this puts the researcher and the researched in a new relation to each other. The subject’s own account of their experiences can no longer be given an alternative interpretation by the researcher who then offers their reading as truth. In the development of alternative research practices, the validity of the participants’ accounts must be acknowledged (Burr, 2003, p.154-155).

Burr (2003) summarizes these reflexivity considerations in four areas: (1) the research recognizes that there is a power imbalance and that there may be more than one

truth; (2) both researcher and participants should be given an opportunity to review the analysis and offer alternative views or conclusions (for the researcher, this may involve analyzing their role in the construction); (3) recognizing that the research itself is playing a role, and consider how the researcher and participant have shaped the context; and (4) there is a range of reflexivity that can be employed, from general statements of view and position, to a disclosure related to values and experiences. These four areas will be addressed in detail from the perspective of this study within the methodology chapter.

Power and reflexivity are both important considerations within the social constructionist theoretical framework. Not only does it establish the ontology and epistemology, it provides the basis for the selection of data collection and analysis methods. It is important that the approach used for this study allows for the considerations of social construction and power to be uncovered by a methodology which will allow for the research questions to be fully explored. The next chapter, Methodology, will present not only the study design and methods of data collection, but also a description of the participants and reflexivity included within this research.

CHAPTER FOUR – METHODOLOGY

This study of workplace ostracism is a departure from the current, laboratory dominated research on ostracism. It is also a departure from the workplace ostracism studies which are based on scales and questionnaires. This qualitative research focuses on the lived experiences of those who have been, or currently are, persistently ostracised at work.

Qualitative research will allow for the collection of detailed experiences. The focus of the research is exploratory, as narratives will be collected with the aim of understanding the viewpoints, opinions, motivations and interpretations of targets of ostracism without prescribed boundaries. The qualitative approach is also favoured as the main goal of the research is to focus specifically on the emotional, social and professional impacts of persistent ostracism. While intensity and duration may be relevant factors, this study aims to understand, not quantify or measure the experience. Finally, as there have been no published studies on persistent workplace ostracism, research of an exploratory nature provides an instinctive starting point.

This chapter will describe both the methods and the processes of data collection and analysis. It begins with an overview of two important topics: interviews and critical discourse analysis. These two sections provide the rationale for the treatment of the data and a description of the goals. Once the data collection and analysis methods have been described, the process which occurred to collect the data, and the participants will be described. This is followed by the first presentation of reflexivity as it relates to the data

collection phase of this study. The chapter concludes with the description of how critical discourse analysis was applied to the texts.

4.1 Interviews

The type of interviews selected for this research is consistent with Mishler's description of narrative interviewing (Mishler, 1986). This form of open-ended, qualitative interviewing goes beyond a positivist interview model, and seeks to develop a comprehensive picture of the lived experience of the individual (Roulston, 2010; Rubin & Rubin, 2012), or what has also been known as thick descriptions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Johnson, 2002; Warren, 2002).

The purpose of the interview is not to provide precise answers to specific questions, but rather to elicit deep and comprehensive descriptions of an individual experience (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Warren, 2002). "A qualitative interview is an excellent method if you want to gain insight into the intentions, feelings, purposes and comprehensions of the interviewee" (Cruickshank, 2012, p. 42). This produces a form of in-depth data on a specific topic, but does not confine the interviewee to only discussing certain aspects of that experience. The interviews are exploratory. The goal is to generate a comprehensive picture of what different experiences of workplace ostracism are like for the person being ostracized. The type of information that is being sought could be considered as sensitive or vulnerable. Participants were asked to reflect on experiences that may be uncomfortable or

unpleasant. When seeking this type of information, a format is required that will allow for the collection of a lived experience through an oral account (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

As participants were asked to reveal experiences that may have been kept silent or private, the interview is a very appropriate approach, as it allows the researcher to “hear the voices of those who are ‘silenced, othered, and marginalized by the dominant social order’” (Liamputtong, 2007, p.7). The interview allows for the participant to tell their own story and provide a contextual, or situated view. Further, the researcher must recognize that this experience could be stressful for the participant, as well as potentially empowering. Ensuring that vulnerable participants are provided resources for support must also be a consideration.

When seeking ‘thick descriptions’ or deep information, the informal structure of the interview is preferred:

If one is interested in questions of greater depth, where the knowledge sought is often taken for granted and not readily articulated by most members, where the research question involves conflicted emotions, where different individuals or groups involved in the same line of activity have complicated, multiple perspectives on some phenomenon, then in-depth interviewing is likely the best approach despite its known imperfections (Johnson, 2002, p.105).

The clarifications or probes are therefore intended not to steer the participant, but rather to ensure that a complete understanding is presented. It is important to not only have information on the participants’ views and experiences of the situation, but also their interpretation (Johnson, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The role of the researcher is

to take “a neutral but interested stance” (Roulston, 2010, p.17) and as a practice “researchers want to understand the participants’ feelings, perceptions and understandings, open questions are particularly useful...for interviewers to answer in their own words... Think of a time when you experienced ____ and describe that in as much detail as possible.” (Roulston, 2010, p.16).

This format of interviewing may result in information or paths not expected: it often takes unexpected turns or digressions that follow the informant’s interests or knowledge. Such digressions or diversions are likely to be very productive, so the interviewer should be prepared to depart from his or her prepared plan...consider following for a while where the informant wants to lead (Johnson, 2002, p.111).

Kvale (1996) described this process as ‘deliberate naiveté’, in which the researcher remains open to what will be described, and does not prepare questions which might lead the discussion: “...the deliberate naiveté and absence of presuppositions advocated are implicit in openness to new and unexpected phenomena. The interviewer should be curious, sensitive to what is said – as well as to what is not said – and critical of his or her own presuppositions” (p.33).

This method of interviewing requires that the interviewed be largely in control of the content of the sharing (Riessman, 2008). The interviewer may ask for clarification, but the interviewee sets the direction. This also helps in equalizing the inevitable power imbalance, as previously discussed. Providing the interviewees latitude to share their experience can be one way to minimize the disparity. This form of interviewing is also recommended for working with populations who may be vulnerable. Allowing the

participant to determine what is or is not relevant to share can help to reduce some of the stress associated with sharing what is usually secret or private information (Holstein & Miller, 1993b; Liamputtong, 2007).

The result is similar to a story-telling approach. This presents a more comprehensive view of the experience than when the interviewer asks structured questions (Mishler, 1986; Warren, 2002). While the interview or story-telling may lead to other areas not expected or perhaps off topic, this also presents the context of the situation. Understanding the relationship between workplace ostracism and other relevant experiences of the participants assists in constructing a more comprehensive view of how the participant assigns meaning to the experience (Johnson, 2002); “Looking at how interviewees connect their responses to a sustained account, that is, a story, brings out problems and possibilities of interviewing that are not visible when attention is restricted to question-answer exchanges” (Mishler, 1986, p.67). Not only does this storytelling type of approach allow for the context to be understood, it also helps to reduce the influence or involvement of the researcher (Mishler, 1986). The participant is therefore in control of the construction or re-construction of the experience (Johnson, 2002; Mishler, 1986).

One of the ways this occurs is by allowing the participant to be in control of the narrative. This tends to be a more familiar and comfortable way of interviewing for a participant to describe their perspectives: “...probably *the* primary way - human beings make sense of their experience is by casting it in a narrative form” (Mishler, 1986, p.68).

Therefore “...the interviewers role is to be a student of the interviewee, learning as much about the topic of inquiry as possible through sensitive questioning” (Roulston, 2010, p.17).

Following the principles of reflexivity, the participants not only provide their descriptions of the lived experience of workplace ostracism, they were also be asked to participate at other junctures. Once the interviews were transcribed, participants were provided with the copy of their interview to review for completeness, and asked to make corrections or revisions as to ensure the transcribed interview represents their experience (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Roulston, 2010). The edited interview was then analyzed using critical discourses analysis.

4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

I see discourses as ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the ‘mental world’ of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world. Particular aspects of the world may be represented differently, so we are generally in the position of having to consider the relationship between different discourses. Different discourses are different perspectives on the world, and they are associated with the different relations people have to the world, which in turn depends on their positions in the world, their social and personal identities, and the social relationships in which they stand to other people. Discourses not only represent the world as it is (or rather is seen to be), they are also projective, imaginaries, representing possible worlds which are different from the actual world, and tied in to projects to change the world in particular directions. The relationships between different discourses are one element of the relationship between different people – they may

complement one another, compete with one another, one can dominate others, and so forth. Discourses constitute part of the resources which people deploy in relating to one another – keeping separate from one another, cooperating, competing, dominating – and in seeking to change the ways in which they relate to one another (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124).

This broad definition of discourse starts to highlight some of the key aspects of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Discourses are the exchanges between people which (socially) construct experiences (Hibberd, 2005; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). They are multi-faceted and include context, other factors we cannot readily see or identify, such as thoughts or feelings (Fairclough, 2009; van Dijk, 1997). Each discourse is situated, in that it has a specific context in which it is created or re-created. These contexts are also socially constructed (Hibberd, 2005; Mumby & Clair, 1997).

Also related to CDA is the dominant discourse. The dominant discourse is the primary discourse that is viewed as true within its context. This discourse also has a link with power. Discourses have a link with other purposes, which could be “social, political or cultural functions of discourse within institutions, groups or society” (van Dijk, 1997, p.5). The dominant discourse is therefore related to social action (Fairclough, 2009; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

One of the ways the dominant discourse interacts with power is through the roles individuals assume within organizations, and the social actions which are considered, through discourse, to be available for that role. “Institutions are embodied in individual experience by means of roles. The roles, objectified linguistically, are an essential

ingredient of the objectively available world in any society” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.74). These roles, while not articulated, are known to the members of the organizations through, among other ways, mental models and communication practices (Mumby & Clair, 1997; van Dijk, 1997). Once members comply or adopt the role, this creates an organizational order, which is known to other members of the organization, and continually re-constructed. “Every discourse has its own borders and beyond those borders, lies the silenced discourse, the hidden world” (Käpylä, 2012, p. 290).

These roles both define and control behaviour (Burger & Luckmann, 1966). The dominant discourse sustains these roles and therefore the social action:

These actions may have very different properties, but they are all *communicative acts*. Although intentions and purposes are usually described as mental representations, they are socially relevant because they manifest themselves as social activity, and because they are ascribed or attributed to us by others who interpret this activity: others thus construct or define us as more or less rational *persons* and at the same time as social *actors* (van Dijk, 1997, p.8)

Dominant discourse is also relevant in terms of the power base of groups. Those who control the discourse are “...clearly dominant, and have more power because it controls most economic, social and symbolic resources, including preferential access to public discourse” (van Dijk, 1997, p.23). Therefore being in control of what is and is not part of the dominant discourse results in the control “...of the minds of others, (and) is in the best interest of the powerful, against the interests of the less powerful and resulting social inequality” (van Dijk, 1997, p. 24).

Therefore it is not only the discourse that becomes relevant or important, but the context in which the discourse occurs. The link between discourse, context and power needs to be made visible within CDA (Blackledge, 2012):

This means that, although we should analyze business organizations as partly discursive objects, we should simultaneously keep a constant analytical focus not just upon discourse as such, but on *relations between discursive and other social elements*. The epistemic interest in this form of critical research is on explicating how these dialectical processes and relations are shaped by relations of power, how the dialectics of discourse figures in the constitution and consolidation of forms of social life which lead to and perpetuate injustices and inequalities and are detrimental to the well-being of many people (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2010, p. 1215).

These representations of power are largely invisible and systemic. “CDA scholars are typically interested in the way discourse (re)produces social *domination*, that is, the *power abuse* of one group over others, and how dominated groups may discursively *resist* such abuse” (van Dijk, 2009, p. 63).

This highlights the critical aspect in which “...‘critique’ is essentially making visible the interconnectedness of things...enables human beings to emancipate themselves from forms of domination through self-reflection. Thus, they are aimed at producing ‘enlightenment and emancipation’” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 7). Further, by utilizing CDA, this will enable “proposals for change and suggest corrections to particular discourses” (Blommaert, 2005, p. 25). As the current literature focuses on

identifying personality based antecedents of targets of ostracism, the need to challenge or disrupt the dominant discourse becomes imperative.

Critical analysis becomes the connection between the dominant discourse, the power embedded in the discourses, and the challenge of social action. Examining the discourse in a critical way allows for other ‘truths’ to be exposed, but perhaps more importantly, it uncovers the deep, even invisible ways that power is hidden, by analyzing discourses within the social context (Mumby & Clair, 1997; van Dijk, 2009; Wodak & Fairclough, 1997; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Of course the purpose of CDA goes beyond identification. “...CDA may be defined as fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (Wodak, 2009, p.2). This requires an analysis of both power and legitimized forms of resistance. The dominant discourse will aim to sustain the power relation. Yet it goes beyond sustaining, as the dominant aspect ensures the ongoing (re)creation of inequity.

van Dijk (2009) charges that one of the primary goals of critical research is to uncover the discourses and norms which create, (re)create and sustain the injustices. However, this is not a theoretical activity, as one of the aims is “...to expose and help to combat such injustice. It is *problem-oriented*” (p.63).

The foundations of CDA as described are an appropriate fit for exploring workplace ostracism through a social constructionist lens. Obviously, CDA has an almost ‘natural’ fit with social construction, as both are concerned with power, social action and social reproduction. Specifically related to workplace ostracism, uncovering the silent

and invisible power structures will be essential for identifying alternatives for coping (Gunnarsson, 1997). The nature of workplace ostracism in itself is related to silence and invisibility, either through action or intention. The goal of ostracism may largely be to silence, minimize or otherwise diminish an individual. Power, specifically discursive power, is a factor, and currently the way that workplace ostracism is both operationalized and sustained is unknown. CDA will allow for the contexts and power relations to be explored.

As ostracism in itself is a power or control strategy, CDA encourages exploration of roles, norms and 'permissible' social action in the form of responding to ostracism. As all organizations create and sustain roles, norms and sanctioned behaviours, it is essential to explore workplace ostracism from a critical perspective.

One aim of this research is to uncover ways in which the negative aspects of workplace ostracism can be reduced. CDA and social constructionism are a good match for exploring such options, by opening:

what can be a precious space for reflection, reconsideration and possible reconstruction. Herein lies an enormous emancipatory potential, granting us a capacity to step outside the taken for granted and to break loose from the sometimes strangulating grip of the commonplace. And herein lies the possibility for new futures as we are invited to consider possibilities for reconstruction (Gergen, 2001a, p.7).

The previous two sections on Interviews and Critical Discourse Analysis present the rationale and foundation for the data collection. The following sections present how this information was utilized within this study. This includes how data was collected and interpreted: recruitment, the interview process, participant descriptions, reflexivity related to data collection and finally, how critical discourse analysis was used to develop themes and findings.

4.3 Data Collection

Recruitment

The process for finding participants to interview resembled that of a case study (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The goal of this research is to build an understanding of the experience of ongoing workplace ostracism. Therefore participants were sought who are/were permanent employees who experienced either ongoing or multiple instances of workplace ostracism (Roulston, 2010). As a result, a very specific group of individuals was sought. As suggested by Warren (2002):

Particular respondents may be sought out to act as key informants...because the object of qualitative interviewing is to discern meaningful patterns within thick description, researchers may try to minimize or maximize differences among respondents...in order to highlight or contrast patterns (p.87).

This method of targeted recruitment affords the opportunity to make comparisons between cases, as well as identify similarities: "...they allow the researcher to compare and contrast the findings deriving from each of the cases. This in turn encourages

researchers to consider what is unique and what is common across cases, and frequently promotes theoretical reflection on the findings” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p.64).

In particular, intensity sampling was used: “...information rich cases are selected in order to examine the phenomenon of interest, however these do not necessarily represent extreme ‘cases’, unique and reputational case sampling are forms of intensity sampling” (Roulston, 2010, p.82).

All twelve of the participants interviewed had worked prior to the ostracism in other organizations where they did not experience any ostracism. Each of the participants expressed surprise when they realized they were being ostracized, as this was not part of their prior work experience. All participants had experienced ongoing workplace ostracism.

While a specific type of diversity was not sought in terms of experiences, the initial goal was to interview equal numbers of men and women so that a gender analysis can be considered. Understanding what may or may not be gendered in terms of workplace ostracism is of particular interest. However, this did not occur, and will be discussed with reflexivity.

The number of interviews conducted was 12, at which point the addition of more participants was not yielding different results:

The number of interviews needed to explore a given research question depends on the nature of that question and the kind or type of knowledge the interviewer seeks...enough interviews must be conducted so that the interviewer feels he or she has learned all there is to learn from the interviews (Johnson, 2002, p.113).

Bryman & Bell, (2007) call this “theoretical saturation” (p.499) in which interviews continue to be conducted until further interviews do not add further unique information.

The twelve individuals were recruited using a variety of methods. The Introductory Letter (see Appendix C) was sent out by e-mail to personal contacts, and posted on social media (such as Facebook and LinkedIn), including posts on pages related to workplace issues such as ostracism, bullying and harassment. As well, the letter was sent directly to human resources professional groups in Canada. Some of these groups sent the letter to members, others included it in their newsletters. Others did not reply or refused to participate. The refusal of participation is discussed in the reflexivity section. In total, 15 individuals replied, of which 12 followed through with completing the interview process. All of the participants were provided with the Introductory Letter, Informed Consent and the Feedback Letter prior to being interviewed. All participants received a copy of all the required forms. The majority were provided with email copies of the forms, even if they had an in-person interview. The Informed Consent was completed prior to all interviews, some by email, some signed in person, and others gave verbal consent which was recorded prior to the commencement of the interview. For those who provided verbal consent, this was recorded on the interview taping and transcript. All participants agreed to have their interviews recorded.

Interview Process

As previously mentioned, all participants were asked and consented to having the interview taped as this ensured that all of their descriptions were accurately captured (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Johnson, 2002; Mishler, 1986). Prior to the recording, identifying information was recorded in a log book which included the participant name and contact information, job title and place of work.

It is important to ensure that the anonymity of the participants is protected at all times. In accordance with the ethical guidelines, potential participants were provided with information on the research, including how their identity will be protected, how the interview products (both taped and written) will be stored and secured, and alternatives for support and intervention should discussing their experiences create distress.

Each participant was asked to select a pseudonym to be used throughout the research. All transcripts were recorded under this pseudonym, and all identifying information is stored separately from the transcripts.

The participants were given the option of a telephone/skype or in person interview. Due to location, the majority of the participants chose a phone or skype interview (8 of the 12 participants). The other four participants were interviewed face-to-face in a private office.

The interviews were conducted over a 5 month period. Each ranged in length from 50 minutes to more than 3 hours. All interviews were recorded and the transcript was produced from the recordings. The transcription of the interview was reviewed (comparing the audio to the print version) “to ensure the most accurate transcript possible

for their own analytic purposes” (Mishler, 1986, p.49). This required that the audio and the print version of the interviews were compared and reviewed, in their entirety, repeatedly (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Mishler, 1986). The interview questions and prompts are also included in each document.

To ensure that the interview process provided the opportunity for voice, all of the participants were asked to, and agreed to participate in the review of their own transcript. Some participants made changes to the transcripts and others did not. There were some parts of the transcripts where corrections were made, items were clarified and a few had additions. Most of the transcripts needed some modification to ensure confidentiality was maintained. This included removing specific references to job tasks, organization purposes and job titles. There were some descriptions of work or work experiences that needed to be removed due to the very sensitive nature, as the reference was unique and identifying. These modifications were related to explaining the context of the ostracism and did not impact the discussion of the ostracism experience. Overall, at least 95% of the transcripts remained in their initial form, as the vast majority was non-identifying.

Interview Questions

All of the participants were asked the same initial questions, which included:

- Can you please tell me in as much detail as possible about your experience with workplace ostracism? Any and all details would be helpful.
- What were some of the first things that you started to notice or question?

- Were there other occasions when you experienced workplace ostracism?
Can you tell me about those?
- (for those who have left the employer) Since changing jobs, have you experienced any workplace ostracism?
- Can you tell me about the impacts workplace ostracism has had on you personally? Professionally? In terms of health? In terms of relationships?
- Who did you go to for support?
- What would you say is the one most difficult aspect of workplace ostracism to cope with?
- If there was one thing that this study was able to convey to others, what message would you want to give?
- Is there anything that I haven't asked you about that you would like to add or you think is important for me to know?

For a few participants, they did not need to be asked many questions. They told their story in detail without much prompting. For the majority, the initial questions were reworded, repeated and rephrased to encourage the participant to continue talking. Most of the interviews required multiple probes.

The probes generally took the following forms:

- You mentioned _____, could you tell me more about that?
- You mentioned _____, could you tell me how you coped with the situation?

- You mentioned _____, how did you try to address that with ____ (ostracizer, supervisor, co-worker, peer, family member, etc.)
- And then what happened? And then what did you do? How did _____ respond in that situation?
- That sounds like a confusing/stressful/horrible/surprising/etc. situation. How did you react to that? How did you make sense of what was happening?

Within all of the interviews, there were times when specific clarification was asked for, such as:

- Was that person your supervisor? Was that person male or female?
- Did you ever talk to _____ about the ostracism?
- Did you ever confront them?

4.4 Participant Profiles

Following is an overview of each participant and the employment situation, which existed when the ostracism occurred. All participants were female and employed in Canada. All of the participants were full time, professional employees. This study did not intend to only recruit females, however only women responded. This will be addressed in the Narratives of Workplace Ostracism chapter. First presented is a chart

which provides a snapshot of the participant profiles. The chart is followed by a brief narrative which describes the participant's work situation in more detail.

Table 1

Interview Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Length of Ostracism	Time with Employer	Ostracizer (s)	Status
Carrie	5 years	19 years	Supervisors, Managers (mainly male)	Still employed
Becky	10 years	15 years	Supervisor, Administrator, Co-Workers (male and female)	Retired
Gus	7 years	17 years	Co-Workers (mainly female)	Sick
Izzy	3 years	13 years	CEO, Managers (all male)	Other employment
Sarah	7 years	7 years	Managers (all male)	Still employed
Diana	5 years	6 years	Co-Workers (all female)	Sick
Fran	1.5 years	4 years	Manager (female)	Resolved
Michelle*	1 year 3 years	1 year 5 years	Co-Workers (all female) Co-Workers, Manager (male and female)	Other employment Return to school
Brenda	5 years	5 years	Co-Workers, Manager, Client Group (male and female)	Still employed
Jessica	3 years	9 years	Co-Workers, Managers (all female)	Other employment
Jana	3 months	3 months	Manager (female)	Other employment
Marjorie	5 years	8 years	Co-Workers (all female)	Other employment
*Experienced ostracism on two occasions with different employers				

Carrie has been with her employer for over 19 years. She has been experiencing workplace ostracism for over 5 years. The ostracism occurs from supervisors and managers. Due to high management turnover within the organization she has had a number of different supervisors/managers. The supervisors/managers appear to be sharing in the ostracism, as existing managers appear to ‘infect’ new managers who then continue the ostracism. Carrie works in a non-traditional field, which is technical in nature and is employed by a branch of a government organization. She is very aware of the impacts that the persistent ostracism is having on both herself and her family. While she looks for other employment, she has developed a number of coping strategies which are avoidance based. She minimizes the amount of time that she spends at the main office and intentionally avoids supervisors. If she does have a formal interaction with a supervisor, she brings an advocate with her. She feels targeted and fears she may lose her job.

Becky worked for her employer for 15 years. She experienced workplace ostracism for over 10 years. The ostracism occurred from a group of employees: 1 supervisor, 1 administrator, and 2 co-workers. There was a situation in the workplace in which a co-worker was being ostracized and Becky was aware the ostracism. One day, there was a staff meeting in which the person being ostracized was ganged-up on. Becky said to herself, ‘that is enough’, and spoke up in support of the ostracized peer. She was then immediately ostracized by the same group of people. This continued for a few years and reduced slightly due to some turnover (as ostracizers left the organization). Becky worked in a professional, therapeutic role in a hospital. She left the organization at retirement.

Gus worked at her employer for over 17 years. She experienced ostracism for over 7 years from a number of co-workers. The ostracism started 10 years into her employment, following returning from a leave of absence. Some of the coworkers were treating her oddly, walking past her, not talking to her or giving very short answers. During meal times, coworkers would not respond to her, or would turn their bodies away from her to exclude her from the conversation. Some of the support staff would not assist Gus. Over time, the other people who had been supportive also withdrew from her. She felt like everyone was against her. Gus brought her concerns forward to Human Resources and managers who did not treat the matter seriously and instead punished Gus. The more Gus spoke up, the more the workplace situation deteriorated. Gus was employed in a professional, therapeutic role within a hospital. She left the organization as the ostracism became unbearable and she was no longer able to work.

Izzy had been with her employer for 13 years. After being promoted into a management position, Izzy experienced workplace ostracism when a new CEO was appointed. She was ostracized primarily by the CEO, but also by other managers who followed the lead of the CEO. She describes how he would put up road blocks for her, not acknowledge her and over time reduced her job duties and her contact with others. He would tell people not to invite her to meetings and was slowly isolating her from her previous workplace supports. At first, others would speak up in her defence, but that stopped relatively quickly. She said that the CEO made it very clear what would happen to someone who was not on 'his side'. She experienced ongoing ostracism for almost 3 years. Izzy was employed as part of a senior management team within a manufacturing

company. She very recently left the company to escape the ostracism when a new job opportunity presented itself.

Sarah has worked for her employer for 7 years and is still employed with them. She experienced ostracism throughout her employment from the senior managers group, following a change in leadership. Sarah believes that much of the ostracism is gendered. Some days she is included in management meetings, but most of the time she is not. There is no one at work for her to talk to or confide in. She struggles with feeling engaged with her work and is not connected to any of the other managers. Sarah is a senior manager in a Canadian branch of a large manufacturing company.

Diana worked for her employer for over 6 years. She was initially ostracized by 2 co-workers, but over time that grew to include up to 5 co-workers. At first she thought she was just being left out of certain social things, like going shopping with coworkers. There were a few coworkers who would do this. Then, as more people joined the department, they would also exclude Diana with the exception of one part time employee. The other coworkers stopped talking to her, they would leave her the worst tasks to complete and would leave her out of meetings. Diana sought help from managers and Human Resources and received virtually no formal help or support. She also sought help from the union and was supported by 2 individuals. Diana worked in a professional administrative role within a hospital. She left the employer due to the ostracism, as she was mentally and physically unable to work.

Fran has worked for her employer for over 4 years. She experienced ostracism approximately 5 months into her employment and it continued for over a year and a half.

Fran was ostracized by her manager; eventually Fran went on sick leave due to the mental and physical stress caused by the ostracism. She also filed a formal complaint through Human Resources, and did receive support from other managers. Following a lengthy investigation, Fran was able to return to work, initially in another department, eventually returning to her original position. Due to the investigation the ostracizer no longer supervises her. Fran stated that a credible Human Resources department and management support was key in this resolution. Fran works as a manager within a government organization. She is still with the organization.

Michelle worked for her employer for a year, where she experienced ostracism from co-workers. She sought support from a supervisor who did not take action to remedy the situation. She left the job when an opportunity presented itself, and enjoyed the first few years at the new employer without ostracism. When management changed, ostracism again occurred, and this continued for over 3 years. Michelle was employed in professional administrative roles in both organizations. One organization was a private employment company and the other was a government organization. She left the government organization to return to school. Michelle is the only participant to have experienced workplace ostracism twice.

Marjorie was with her employer for over 8 years. She was ostracized by a co-worker who worked in the same room, directly beside Marjorie for a number of years. She experienced ostracism from this co-worker as soon as she began employment, until the co-worker was let go due to a change in management. . A few times a week, the co-worker would be very sweet and polite, usually when someone else was around.

Marjorie said sometimes it was like a split person. Marjorie went to her boss, a vice president, for help, but he said there was nothing he could do, and to 'suck it up'. In total, Marjorie was ostracized for over 5 years. Marjorie did not receive support from management although it was well known that the co-worker was ostracizing Marjorie. Eventually, Marjorie was promoted, resulting in few opportunities for ostracism. Marjorie worked in an administrative role for a very large, private company at a Canadian office. She was then promoted to a management position. She left the organization to pursue other opportunities, as promotion past a certain level was unlikely with the employer.

Brenda has been with her employer for over 5 years, and has experienced ostracism throughout. She has been and continues to be ostracized by a co-worker, a manager, and members of a client group served by the organization. The ostracism began for Brenda her first day on the job. She thinks it may have started as a result of a non-verbal gesture, but recognizes that is only her interpretation, and the only reason she can think of for being ostracized. She does not understand how one tiny moment could not be overcome. She made many efforts to be helpful and polite, but they were not accepted. She has not sought any support from Human Resources, as Brenda does not view the department as credible or objective. The manager has not investigated the reports of ostracism regarding the client group. Brenda has recently spoken to her union regarding possible alternatives but fears making the situation worse. Brenda works in a professional administrative role in an educational institution. She continues to work for the employer.

When Jessica first started working for the company, it was a very supportive environment. After approximately 6 years, she transferred to a different department and location where the ostracism began immediately. Many co-workers and managers, including those at the senior levels, ostracized her. She did not know what she did that caused this to happen. She did not know anyone at this office and when she worked at the other location, she had very good relationships. Jessica worked in a professional administrative role within a large financial company. She left after 3 years when her job was deemed redundant.

Jana worked for her employer in an intern position for 3 months. She experienced ostracism continually from her manager. The ostracism started her first day on the job. At first she was confused by the treatment, and thought that she might be provoking the manager. She had many examples of how the manager would pretend she was not there, would skip over her, would not say her name. There were daily check-ins within the organization and a lot of supervision, so the ostracism was noticeable daily for Jana. She did not seek support from other levels of management due to fear of reprisal. Jana worked in a professional administrative role within a non-profit organization. She left at the end of her internship.

From these profiles, it is evident that this study is examining not only persistent workplace ostracism, but extremely long standing ostracism experiences. The length of time the ostracism actively occurred (or in some cases, is still occurring) ranges from a period of 3 months to over 10 years. Half of the participants experienced very long term ostracism, of five years and over. The other six women experienced ostracism for a

period of 3 months to 3 years, with the majority being ostracized for over a year and a half.

The professions of the participants were varied. Six of the participants worked in professional administrative roles, three worked in management, two were employed in professional therapeutic roles in health care, and one worked in a technical position. The industries included four private companies, three governmental organizations, three hospitals, one non-profit and one educational institution. None of the participants worked for the same employer.

4.5 Reflexivity – Data Collection

Following the principles of reflexivity, the participants not only provide their descriptions of the lived experience of workplace ostracism, they also participated at other junctures. They reviewed and revised their transcripts, commented on the results, analysis and recommendations. Their comments resulted in changes in all of these areas of the report, thereby improving the final product, ensuring that their voices were represented in a way they found to be accurate.

Collecting this type of information is not without barriers. My main method of recruitment was to reach out to over 300 Human Resource professionals to be referred to those who had been ostracized, with the rationale that they may have been approached by these individuals for support. I was able to recruit approximately half, 7, of my participants in this manner. Given the large number of individuals I contacted, the rate of

securing interviews was extremely low. The vast majority did not respond to my request. There was one President of a Human Resources group who asked: ‘Why would we want to encourage our employees to speak about something like that? I don’t see that as being positive for the organization’.

I also recruited through personal networks, which resulted in more referrals than interviews. While 4 did complete the interview, there were 3 others who indicated that they would be interested and provided me with some initial information on their situations, but then did not follow through with being interviewed. I do not know why they changed their minds.

I also recruited on websites which focused on workplace issues such as bullying and secured 1 participant. Unfortunately the majority who contacted me were from the United States. In total, I actively recruited for over 5 months, and was able to secure 12 interviews. Overall, I did find it difficult to connect with people who had experienced persistent ostracism. Based on the interview data, persistent ostracism is isolating and shameful, which impacts the way in which those individuals reach out, or in many cases, do not reach out for help.

I did offer all participants a variety of ways to be interviewed: in person, over the telephone or by Skype. For in person interviews I offered three possible locations to maximize privacy and choice. Of the 12 interviews, one (1) was conducted by Skype, four (4) were in person and the remaining seven (7) were over the telephone. The interviews that were conducted in person tended to be longer than those over the phone, perhaps due to level of comfort, either with the topic or myself as an interviewer. I have many years of experience interviewing clients on subjects such as violence, mental health

and addictions, criminal activities and other sensitive social and health issues. My goal was to ensure that participants felt comfortable, not judged and able to be vulnerable. Throughout the interviews, half of the participants had emotional reactions, most in the form of crying. Over half of the participants were still actively coping with the ostracizer, ostracism or the after affects. There were also three participants who showed some signs of hypervigilance around identifying information, wanting phrases that I considered to be generic (such as 'payroll responsibilities') changed so that there was no indication of the type of job duties. These requests were all accommodated as it was important for the participants to be in control of the content of their transcripts. The stigma of being ostracized and the need for privacy and confidentiality was clear.

The interest of the participants in the research was apparent. Many commented after reading the chapters on results, discussion and analysis that they: (a) related to the experiences of others and found some degree of comfort due to a shared experience; (b) were reminded of other instances of their own ostracism as they had forgotten some examples; and/or (c) were triggered and became emotional re-reading their own experiences and the suffering other others. I believe that the strong reactions are due to the isolating and secretive nature of ostracism, and the extreme pain that such an experience produces. There were also comments thanking me for doing this kind of research, for giving the participants a voice.

I am a Registered Psychotherapist as well as a researcher. It was very hard to remain in the researcher role and continue to follow the interview format when the participants were emotional. I wanted to provide them with a therapy response instead of an interview response. I dealt with this by attempting to make empathetic but non-

engaging statements, such as ‘that sounds so difficult’ or ‘how terrible that happened to you’. It was difficult to avoid a counselling response and at times I simply said ‘oh no’.

As persistent workplace ostracism is secretive, shameful and stressful in nature, it was my opinion that a number of the participants could have benefited by discussing these difficult emotions with a supportive professional. I recognize that this is my own bias. The personal and emotional disclosures were more than I had originally anticipated. I was not expecting the acute reactions or the level of malicious behaviours that the participants were subjected to. I also was not expecting the periods of chronicity to be so long.

Another barrier I encountered was that all of the individuals who contacted me were female. I am unsure as to why this occurred. Perhaps it is due to the use of Human Resources professionals who are largely female, or women may have been more comfortable contacting me, or reaching out to others for help. I did have one male who was referred by a participant but this occurred after I had stopped interviewing.

There was one situation which was potentially identifying that I was very disappointed to have to remove. It was an example of a third party who was being ostracized at work. While there were not many details provided, the situation ended in a shocking manner. It was not the experience of the person I was interviewing, and therefore not appropriate to include. However, it did present an outcome that no one else in the study mentioned and therefore it was unfortunate that it could not be included. I did spend time thinking of how the information could be proposed or introduced in another manner, but ultimately stopped trying to control that aspect of the process. It was

not appropriate to include, and as the participant did not want it mentioned, it needed to remain non-negotiable.

Although I believe I have read almost everything written on ostracism, and was expecting to hear stories which were painful, I did not anticipate the degree of chronicity nor the impacts that have not lifted. Over half of the women that I spoke to are still suffering on a daily basis. The removal from the work environment has not alleviated this pain, although for some it is improving with time and distance. While I expected some of the consequences to be longer-term, I did not anticipate that there may be some impacts which are permanent.

There were many parallels between the stories of ostracism and the stories I heard while working in a women's shelter. This aspect of reflexivity will be presented in Chapter 7 following the conclusions.

I was also expecting that for some participants, it might be apparent to me why they were ostracized. I was partially expecting some of the participants to have traits which may have contributed to the ostracism. I was guilty of blaming the target before even hearing their story. I think this is part of the dominant discourse that surrounds ostracism and workplace bullying, in which the solution is placed on the target, instead of the subject.

There were no women that I interviewed that showed any traits which were what I believe linked to ostracism, such as those identified within the laboratory research (such as narcissism or paranoia). This assumption may have also been based on my own workplace experiences. I have not experienced ongoing workplace ostracism, although

there have been times during my employment where I experienced an incident of ostracism. I have not always been welcomed into all work groups whether inside my place of employment or through work networks, but I do not feel I was ever actively excluded. I have, however, seen this happen to others, and being a member of the organization, in most circumstances I was aware of why it was happening – or at least why I was told or why I inferred it was happening. However, I have never witnessed a persistent situation. Any situation I was aware of would have been shorter in duration, although I certainly have witnessed and tried to manage situations of persistent favouritism and targeting of lower producing or stereotyped employees.

I also recognize that there may have been image management active within the interviews. However, I still find it impossible to imagine that anyone could behave at work in a way that would warrant the degree of sustained isolation, gossip, and hateful behaviours that the participants experienced. There would never be a situation in which such treatment should be tolerated. Further, as a professional who has managed staff for over 20 years, I find it both disgusting and disappointing that managers would both participate in, and condone, that type of treatment from one employee to another. This experience has prompted me to continue to investigate workplace ostracism, combined with the theory of abusive supervision.

I found all of the women I interviewed to be very thoughtful. They took time answering questions and the majority had spent a great deal of time scrutinizing their own behaviours. I found their self-awareness and degree of vulnerability to be very high, and frequently they were over-critical of their weaknesses. I was surprised at the sheer

amount of self-reflection they had all undertaken as a means of solving or attempting to reduce the ostracism. This reflection went far beyond self-blame. I do not often see that degree of inward examination from my clients who have chosen to participate in therapy. It was both unexpected and encouraging.

4.6 Data Analysis

Narrative Analysis of Texts

The interviews produced 12 distinct texts, one for each participant. These texts ranged in length from 9 to 66 pages, with a total of 265 pages. As the texts were transcribed, I would check them against the recording and proofread each interview for spelling and grammar. The texts were then sent to the participant for review. This process occurred over the course of 7 months.

Once I had reached saturation, stopped interviewing and had all the texts returned, I began the process of a narrative analysis to summarize the interviews and identify themes. As I had already spent time reading and re-reading the texts, there were some themes which I had already identified. However, to ensure that all texts were treated in the same manner, before coding any of the interviews, I read each interview in its entirety and repeated this for 3 additional readings. This is a method that I have used on other narrative analysis and hermeneutic analysis which I have found helpful to both familiarize myself with the entire text, and to ensure that the focus is not only on particular aspects.

Throughout these readings I made notes of phrases and words that were used repeatedly. At the end of the complete readings, I had a list of both examples of ostracism and impacts, as well as a long list of words which represented emotions.

I then began to code each interview. A cover sheet with the following sections was developed and completed for each interview:

1. Ostracizer, work situation (duration, structure of organization, attempts at resolution)
2. Examples of ostracism
3. Questioning/Blaming Self/Confidence/Self-Esteem
4. Isolation: work, relationships, personal
5. Disrupted Healthy Behaviours: sleep, eating, exercise
6. Anxiety: panic, nervous, dread
7. Depression: sadness, hopelessness, crying
8. Work Performance: functioning, job search, feedback
9. Irrelevance: insignificant, no purpose
10. Unique Comments: (not included elsewhere that I did not want to miss, including references to ongoing impacts after leaving the workplace)

I then went through each text again, coded and numbered each response (where appropriate) and logged the example, number and page number on the cover sheet. I also highlighted certain passages and quotations which were examples that I found to be particularly powerful or insightful.

During this coding process, I also flagged and marked references which directly or indirectly indicated social or organizational power. Included in this were expressions of asking for help, attempts at resolution, management responses, examples of organizational structure, peer references to control or influence over others, references of policy or interventions. This was not included in the themes, but rather utilized during the critical discourse analysis, to be discussed in the following section. While the process for the narrative analysis was separate from the critical discourse analysis, all of the coding occurred at the same time.

From this process, I then framed the Examples of Ostracism and Themes. I developed an outline which represented the different types of examples that I wanted to include when writing the next chapter. There were far too many examples to include all of the quotes within a certain example or theme. I tried to ensure that a range of experiences were illustrated, and that those who did not have the experience were also included. There were many situations where multiple participants had very similar comments (for example: not being acknowledged or left out of a meeting). I tried to select the most descriptive quotes, while being mindful that one of the ways that the participants can restore power is by opportunity for voice. Therefore I tried to be somewhat equitable with the selection of quotes so that all voices made contributions.

Once the examples and themes were completed and those sections written, I began to apply the process of critical discourse analysis.

Critical Discourse Analysis: Dialectical-Relational Approach

Throughout the critical discourse analysis (CDA), I utilized both the original text and the sections that I had written on examples and themes. I used the original texts for the flags and markings related to power and organizational structure, but used the summaries that I had written to relate back to the experiences. I found using the original texts for both purposes was too cumbersome, and I wanted to keep the focus on the aspects of power and how those would relate to my analysis.

I selected Fairclough's (2009) Dialectical-Relational Approach after reviewing a number of options. As the texts I am using do not relate to the same context (although all are organizational contexts), I wanted to use a method which was more specific to particular events, as opposed to examining the specifics of a workplace context.

The methodology described by Fairclough (2009) cautions that "We can identify 'steps' or 'stages' in the methodology only on condition that these are not interpreted in a mechanical way: these are essential parts of the methodology...the relationship between them in doing research is not simply that of sequential order" (p. 167).

Fairclough (2009, p. 167) presents the steps as consisting of:

Stage 1: Focus upon a social wrong, in its semiotic aspect

Stage 2: Identify obstacles to addressing the social wrong

Stage 3: Consider whether the social order 'needs' the social wrong

Stage 4: Identify possible ways past the obstacles

I selected this form of CDA also because of the specific focus on ‘social wrong’, which I believe is a good fit for a socially based process such as ostracism. While Fairclough (2009) describes the methodology largely with examples of global and political topics, I feel it is a good fit for a social experience which impacts all aspects of an individual’s life. He suggests that when using this approach, that economics, sociology and the nature of power relationships should be considered. He also references the internalization of the experiences in a way that cannot be represented only by words, but also by the unspoken gestures and signs that accompany communication. Therefore I felt that this method, while perhaps not intended to study a specific interpersonal dynamic, was fitting.

Stage 1: Focus upon a social wrong, in its semiotic aspect

In Stage 1, Fairclough (2009) describes social wrongs as “aspects of social systems, forms or orders which are detrimental to human well-being” (p. 167). He also suggests selecting “the topic which have not been sufficiently attended to in existing social research” (p. 168). I felt this was particularly appropriate for workplace ostracism as it had not been viewed as a social process in previous laboratory research. This method of CDA would help to keep the focus on the relationship and personal aspects of persistent workplace ostracism.

I felt that this stage was largely completed within the narrative analysis and the identification of themes. This section highlights the social wrongs by way of consequences to individuals, which are represented by the themes. It also represents the

social wrongs in terms of lack of support or resources, which was presented as part of the isolation theme.

During the interviews, I believe that after interview 4, I had already identified one of the items that is discussed within Analysis: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As will be presented within the Reflexivity: Analysis, I could already identify traits of PTSD within the first few interviews. This form of social wrong, the neglect of an employee to the point of (potentially) developing a mental health issue, is one of the unique contributions of this study.

Stage 2: Identify obstacles to addressing the social wrong

Stage 2 is where I utilized the aspects of power that I had previously flagged within the interviews. I considered power, or lack of power, to be the primary obstacle, and examined the location of power in order to determine how the obstacle was being maintained. Fairclough (2009) states that “Stage 2 approaches the social wrong in a rather indirect way by asking what it is about the way in which social life is structured and organized that prevents it from being addressed. This requires bringing in analyses of social order” (p. 169).

In this stage, I examined not only the structural elements of power as related to organizational power, but also the expressed social and informal power that was exercised by the ostracizer. Not only were there examples of power or lack of power within certain individuals, this also applied to organizational departments and policy. I already had flagged some examples of power, and then re-read each interview for

examples of either power or non-power. Within the personal descriptions, there were far more examples of non-power, which was represented by hopelessness, defeat, isolation and self-doubt. It was important to recognize that not having options was a form of non-power, and that the dynamic created by ostracism resulted in the removal or reduction of power. This non-power was expressed in emotional distress by the participants. While initially I interpreted the emotional expressions as impacts and consequences, they were also examples of non-power or lack of power. The result of the persistent ostracism had resulted in a level of distress that removed the perception of alternatives. Therefore the themes of isolation, anxiety and depression were also examples of the lack of power, or lack of perception of power. For example, the degree of isolation resulted in compounding effects, in which the individual became sure that there would be no help or support, resulting in powerlessness. However, this is not a result of being isolated. This is a result of being intentionally isolated over and over again by an important social group. This powerlessness developed due to the intentional, persistent nature of the actions of another, which systematically removed the power from the participant.

Therefore the identification of obstacles became both organizational and psychological. The organizational obstacles were somewhat consistent and easier to identify. As many participants were ostracized by supervisors or managers, these obstacles are clear.

However, as the above isolation example illustrates, most participants were also extremely compromised by obstacles which had a psychological basis. For some, this was what I had classified as PTSD traits. The overwhelming stress response to inhuman

treatment created an obstacle to address the social wrong. By allowing or enabling ostracism, the organization has supported the growth and legitimacy of this obstacle. Participants who identified anxiety and depression also stated that the changes in their behaviour were evident at work, and yet organizational interventions were not forthcoming. Rather, the ostracism was allowed to continue.

For the analysis of abusive relationships, the same rationale held. However, it was not until I mapped out the cycle of trying to please or pacify an individual who was inflicting negative behaviours that the pattern of abuse became apparent.

These two areas represented the obstacles which are intertwined with aspects of power. The organizational alternatives for addressing the ostracism are controlled by those who are either implementing or complicit in the ostracism. This power is at times assigned by the organization, and others it is controlled by a peer group. The ability of individuals to ostracize a group member, and then influence others to stay silent or also participate in the ostracism is another power based obstacle. The non-action of management allows, or encourages this behaviour to continue, thereby increasing the social power of the ostracizer while minimizing the target.

Within this section, the connection between power and group dynamics was also considered, from the perspective of social identity theory and unethical behaviours. Specifically, the link between in-group behaviour and organizationally-sanctioned power and out-group inferiority is relevant (Tajfel, 1982). As well, the uniqueness of persistent workplace ostracism creating an out-group of one sheds light on the lack of meaningful

existence and feelings of irrelevance, as “this consensual inferiority is reproduced as relative self-derogation on a number of indices” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 37).

Stage 3: Consider whether the social order ‘needs’ the social wrong

While Stage 3 may be fitting for other types of research, I did not see a way in which persistent workplace ostracism was needed. Perhaps it is used by employees to control, influence or isolate an employee who is not performing or somehow is not a ‘fit’ with the culture. Perhaps it is a means by which an unskilled or incompetent manager tries to control the behaviours of the employees, or a way to create fear or intimidation in others.

Within a Canadian workplace, this should not be necessary. There are many other means by which behaviours or performance can be managed. Additionally, there would never be a need for this type of cruelty within a workplace or workgroup. I was not able to identify a situation in which persistent workplace ostracism, or workplace violence would be ‘needed’.

There are socio-pathological purposes, or ‘needs’ that can be fulfilled by ostracizing, related to othering theory. The desire to ‘show’ oneself as better or superior, as an employee or team member could be a motivation. Described as ‘selfing’, people strive to maintain a positive view of self. One way this can be accomplished is “to conceive a sense of goodness, uniqueness and continuity” (Gülerce, 2014, p. 245). This would be a prosocial approach. However, for those perpetrating ostracism, they are ‘othering’. This occurs when the self is elevated above the other, in a role of dominance

(DeBeauvoir, 1952). Those who are denied power and “kept in a state of dependence...have been definitely established as the Other” (DeBeauvoir, 1952, p. 139). This concept can operate between two individuals or two groups, or between a group and an individual (Young, 2005), as is the case with workplace ostracism.

Othering is a means by which to separate oneself which creates not only behavioural but cognitive divisions (Olson, 2001). By viewing someone as the ‘other’, they can be marginalized, oppressed and excluded so the self is viewed as favourable (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012). This creates a vulnerability for the other, as they are not thought of as valuable and as a result can be objectified (Garmann Johnsen, 2010). This dynamic is attractive to the ostracizer, as “powerful actors have the capacity and responsibility to design and legitimize strategies, structures, and processes...powerful agents play a crucial role in promoting organizational values and morality” (Durand & Calori, 2006, p. 100).

When applied to group dynamics, the experience of being othered increases the risk to one party while increasing the power of the self. This fulfills both the ego and self-esteem needs for the ostracizer, as they establish themselves as dominant, privileging themselves over others, utilizing the differences as a rationalization and motivation for unethical treatment (Galperin, Bennett & Aquino, 2001; O’Fallon & Butterfield, 2012).

Stage 4: Identify possible ways past the obstacles

Looking for ways that a complex social issue such as persistent workplace ostracism can be overcome was not straightforward. This was not a clear solution, as

ostracism is performed in many ways and results in many consequences. Additionally, the somewhat secretive or invisible nature of ostracism compounds the problem. I wanted to ensure that the power identified within the Stage 2 analysis was included in a realistic way. Currently, the solutions proposed to address workplace ostracism are lacking in both potential and results. They largely resemble the recommendations that have been made to combat bullying, which, however, have not proven to be very effective. It became obvious early within this analysis that traditional policy was not going to address the situation. Fairclough (2009) also suggests that the “focus would include ways in which dominant discourse is related to, contested, criticized and opposed” (p. 171).

Challenging the dominant discourse is included within the Recommendations, which position the focus of conflict resolution as inaccurate and ineffective, and suggests that ostracism should be considered as a psychological and safety based issue. As a result, the interventions must take these two aspects into account, instead of suggesting a way to increase cooperation, which the conflict resolution approach has proposed.

Additionally, to find other ways past the obstacle include looking at the possibility of resolving the issue within the current context. As this, from the participant reports, was clearly not realistic, other ways to maintain the well-being of the individual had to be considered. All of the participants felt, at one time or another, that there was something they could do to influence the ostracism, to reduce it or to find a way to avoid it. However, this was not accurate. Most situations of ostracism ended because someone left the organization. For those who are still working within the situation, a new

discourse is needed. The situation is not going to improve, and neither are the impacts on the individual. It would require a disruption to the idea that things can get better, and a shift toward self-preservation. These suggestions are presented within Recommendations.

As mentioned previously, this process did not occur in a step-by-step manner. I revisited certain steps many times, both during the data analysis and other times, including reviewing and revising my document, and after receiving feedback from others on my study and the processes within. I felt that there was much added value to the study by returning to the CDA process and findings multiple times, as it took practice and different forms of consideration to both locate the power and the options to overcome the obstacles.

This chapter has outlined the methodology utilized within this study, and how the methodology was applied. It introduced the 12 participants and provided an overview of their work situation, in a way which protected their identity. It also presented the forms of analysis. Within this chapter, there were references to the following chapters, which present the outcomes from the study. As identified within the Narrative Analysis of Texts, the following chapter presents the summary of the interviews, which includes both the Examples of Ostracism and the Themes.

CHAPTER 5 – NARRATIVES OF WORKPLACE OSTRACISM

This chapter will provide a summary of the persistent workplace ostracism experienced by the study participants. The narratives have been broken down into three main sections: Examples of Ostracism, Themes: Consequences of Persistent Ostracism, and Discussion.

The Examples of Ostracism provides details on how the participants were ostracized at work, and highlights the differences between the prescribed definitions of workplace ostracism and the ways in which the participants described the operationalization. This section provides additional insights into the intentionality of ostracism as well as many ways that ostracism is commonly communicated.

Themes: Consequences of Persistent Ostracism section provides the findings related to workplace ostracism that are new and unique to this study. They are grouped into three main topics: emotional, social and professional impacts. Within each of these themes, there are some consequences that have not previously been identified, and others which are identified with a new significance or severity. In this section the most important discoveries of this study: long term impacts and irrelevance are presented. Neither of these areas have been explored within ostracism research, yet they were common impacts for those who have experienced persistent ostracism.

This chapter concludes with a Discussion, which presents a brief comparison between the laboratory and lived experiences research. This highlights the similarities and differences between short term, acute ostracism and persistent workplace based

ostracism. It also discusses the ways in which this study contributes to the existing literature as a result of the exploratory nature.

Each of these sections provides multiple examples of the experiences and consequences by way of direct quotes from the participants. Many examples are provided in each section so that both a comprehensive description is provided, and to recognize both the similarities and differences in the lived experience. Also, many of the participants had not previously had an opportunity to fully discuss or reflect on their experiences. As a result, an important part of the process for the participants was to have someone to bear witness to their experience. Providing multiple, detailed quotes ensures that the participants have a full opportunity for voice within this research (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012). This also enables the reader to consider the interpretations of the writer/researcher, thereby reducing potential objectification (Garmann Johnsen, 2010).

5.1 Examples of Ostracism

During each interview, participants were asked how ostracism was communicated. While the initial definition of ostracism was provided to the participants in the introductory letter, specific details of what comprises ostracism was not. It was important that the participants were able to develop their own individual definitions of ostracism, and that they were able to include examples from their own experience, not the pre-existing definition.

This section will outline by category the type of ostracism that was both defined and experienced by the participants collectively.

The types of ostracism that were experienced have been grouped into the following categories: lack of acknowledgement, exclusion from conversations, ignoring and dismissive behaviours, non-verbal cues, gossip, not invited to meetings and removal of job duties.

The first three categories (lack of acknowledgement, excluded from conversations, ignoring and dismissing behaviours) are consistent with the existing measure of workplace ostracism. However, the quotes in these areas are still presented as they illustrate the varied and intentional way that ostracism is communicated. While the measures of ostracism (Ferris et al., 2008) present items such as ‘others ignored you at work’ and ‘your greetings have gone unanswered’, they do not provide a comprehensive view of how ostracism is enacted. The quotes provide full, contextualized examples.

The next four categories (non-verbal cues, gossip, not invited to meetings, removal of job duties) are not represented within the current measures of ostracism. These examples provide key information on how ostracism is utilized and communicated at work. As well, it includes behaviours that the majority of participants identified as ostracizing, two of which are workplace specific. It is important to highlight and capture these items as they have not been studied or included in the past. The inclusion of these categories is both a unique contribution of this study as it expands the knowledge of ostracism at work.

Lack of Acknowledgement

One of the most common ways that ostracism was communicated on an on-going basis was by not acknowledging the individual. This included not responding to greetings, not making eye contact, or not introducing the person in group or social situations. Following are some examples of how the participants were not acknowledged.

In the hallways and such they either won't acknowledge me or they will acknowledge me and basically tell me that they have complained about me and indicate they are going to get me fired (Brenda).

He would skip over me when he did round table (Izzy).

100% - it happened so frequently it was horrible. I would say, 'good morning, how are you?' She would literally not even acknowledge me or pretend I wasn't even there...

I do know that if I needed something from her, I would call her name and she wouldn't even look at me and I would call her name two or three times, and then I would have to get up and stand in front of her and say 'I'm talking to you' (Marjorie).

Complete, blatant ignoring you – not acknowledging you in the halls or not saying 'good morning' to you – just ignoring basic civility – and it was very strategic (Michelle).

They [co-workers] stopped talking to me – I would enter a room and say 'good morning' and not get anything (Diana).

There's this manager I walk by every day in the hallway who cannot raise his head to say hi to me (Carrie).

So, at least once every day we have these little meetings...and again she rattles off the names and she didn't say my name...every time we had this huddle, she would leave my name out (Jana).

Exclusion From Conversations

Another common form of ostracism was not being included in a conversation and people stopping conversations when the participant entered a room.

The ignoring, the whispering, and the talking in secret. The manager would go for a meeting, and then they would close the door and start huddling behind it and talking (Michelle).

Sometimes I'm left out of conversations or decisions. I'm not included in certain areas of the business concept (Sarah).

In terms of excluding me from conversations and not really working with me as well...this colleague would not include me and not work with me at all...if no one is around we hardly speak to each other (Brenda).

They wouldn't talk to me, and if my manager did speak to me, he would only speak to me harshly (Becky).

She wouldn't even sit in a room with me, like, if I had to ask her a question she would call her secretary in and ask her to take notes...I would speak and she would go on as if I hadn't spoken at all (Fran).

Even then they would not include me in the conversation. They would make sure it was a conversation only the three of them could have...If I did say something, their eyes would roll or they would talk over me so there was no point in participating (Jessica).

It was horrible to be excluded from things. I would go down for lunch and I would attempt to converse with everyone like everyone else, I would try to get a word in edge-wise and I was usually ignored or looked at as if 'why are you talking?' (Gus).

Ignoring and Dismissive Behaviours

The next category of behaviours includes intentionally ignoring an individual by ways such as acting as if they do not exist or were not heard when speaking, as well as dismissive behaviours such as making eye contact but refusing to verbally acknowledge the individual. These behaviours differ from the first section - lack of acknowledgement - as the ostracizer clearly wanted the participant to know that she is obviously present but not worthy of engaging. As well, this section includes examples of ignoring while engaging others, to point out the intentionality of the behaviour.

She [manager] was rolling her eyes to me at meetings and I had no more access to her and if I walked by her office her secretary would said, 'Oh, she's busy'...and became completely inaccessible. I could never get a hold of her, even through e-mail. If she had to send me any emails it would come through her secretary (Fran).

Nothing I had to say was important and no one found anything I had to offer important (Gus).

The intentional ignoring and dismissive behaviours. There was no empathy and no compassion...As if they sense that you're already weak, and if they see you down and out, they want to use that time to pounce (Michelle).

They would never call me by name or say, 'Oh, can you help us with this?' They would just look at this and say, 'Can you do this?' They would shove papers at me, and completely ignore me, and actually turn their backs to me so that their backs were towards to me and obviously I couldn't participate in that conversation (Jessica).

Then, he actually went to an individual that he did not know that I had a good relationship with and he told them not to talk to me under any circumstances (Izzy).

When they would take off for an entire day and leave me and perhaps one other woman – it didn't sit well with me. It felt more like desertion that eventually turned into ostracism (Diana).

When they contracted my job out and forced me into the new department, no one told me... Everyone is supposed to get First Aid or whatever, stuff like that. And there was department-specific training that you could go and get upgraded in, and I was never included in that (Carrie).

Non-Verbal Cues

Non-verbal cues of ostracism were also mentioned frequently. This area represents some of the more subtle ways in which ostracism is communicated, that might not be obvious to others. However, the participants could easily identify the ways in which the ostracizer was communicating a lack of acceptance or disdain without words. Eye rolling, lack of eye contact, creating physical distance and moving away were frequent ways this was communicated, as well as hostile eye contact.

He gave me an evil glare, and just walked by, he turned his whole body away from me and did not talk to me. He actually looked over me to talk to someone else" (Izzy).

When I first got back people were not looking me in the eye, walking right by me... People would adjust their bodies so that they didn't even have to look at me – I didn't know what was going on (Gus).

It's what I call evil glares – in the hallways just not even acknowledging me – if we're just walking in the hallway she gives what I call an evil glare. People call it different things but it's basically a bad look (Brenda).

Gossip

Another way the participants identified ostracism was through gossip. Gossip was described in two ways: as a tool to show why a person should be ostracized, or to question the credibility of the participant. Gossip could also be considered in some of the other categories, but due to the way that gossip can cause those not originally involved with the ostracism to join in, or to appear to have ‘picked sides’, it was important to highlight those examples. The gossip examples also illustrate how an environment further deteriorates so that the participants were clearly feeling as though they did not belong or were not wanted.

When she [the manager] started, she had to do our performance reviews and didn't know any of us...and she said that people thought I was scary. Like, I was scary? I didn't know what that meant...So, the following year, I asked if she still thought I was scary and she rolled her eyes and said ‘That's what happens when you ask other people’ (Carrie).

The whispering, the talking amongst each other, the intentional not working with you when it's supposed to be a team environment...these backhanded, undermining things that kept being persistent (Michelle).

I couldn't bring myself to go to work, and that day the younger [co-worker] was in the cafeteria saying that I called in sick today because I didn't want to do work and people were laughing with her...One co-worker from my unit was probably the ring leader because she was the one who always wanted to pipe up first and say something about me or say something to me, and it just made others seem comfortable with it...She [the manager] was watching me and discussing with others about what I was doing (Gus).

When I do disclose personal information to her I feel that she doesn't take it appropriately and she tries to use it against me (Brenda).

I learned a very valuable lesson there – people will say all sorts of things, but when you actually say, ‘Hey, this is not right, this is enough’, everyone will just sit there like they have tape over their mouth (Becky).

During this time I knew through rumours – and even prior to that people had told me that she was saying things behind my back (Fran).

Not Invited to Meetings

Not being invited to meetings was another common way that participants were intentionally left out. Some of the experiences were from staff or team meetings, others were incidents at the management level. The significance of this type of ostracism is that even for those participants who were only ostracized by one individual, they still experienced some degree of group ostracism. This group ostracism may have been initiated by one ostracizer, but it transferred into social and group situations.

A meeting invitation would get sent out and she would answer and say I didn’t need to be there (Fran).

Things got worse every time. I started being left out of meetings. I found out through a mutual friend that they had meetings about me, Human Resources had meetings about me (Diana).

There was a meeting about my unit which I often wasn’t invited to which was weird. But, I found out they had a meeting and I asked why I wasn’t invited and they said they figured I had too much to do and didn’t want me to get behind anymore – as if that was their decision (Gus).

Well, one of the harshest parts was the individual who was being ostracized in the first place wound up abruptly leaving the organization. There was no debriefing until months later, and I was sent out [by management] to do a talk [in the

community]... during the debriefing so I wasn't even able to be involved in that (Becky).

I had to fight for everything – it was a battle to get meetings, he would cancel them...I was always involved in certain HR meetings that I was [then] eliminated from. He told me I wasn't required to attend (Izzy).

Removal of Job Duties

The second work specific narrative of ostracism is the removal of job duties. In addition to not being invited to meetings or included in conversations, another way the participants were isolated was by minimizing their role within the work group or organization. The removal of key duties was effective in reducing the interactions of the participant, or further devaluing their contributions.

I did payroll, pension and benefits. She would continuously send it all back to the financial department which made my job obsolete...But she had done a lot of things to undermine and [make you] question yourself...she would make you start to doubt yourself and question yourself, which gave her leverage to take away your responsibilities and your job (Michelle).

Yes, and isolating me from my own work. Like, she would go to my subordinates and get them to do things that were particularly in my [job]...I was completely out of the loop, and normally it would have been in the person at my level who would have been doing all of the reporting, and all of the communicating to the media (Fran).

I had been there longer than the other two and was never asked to fill in for the manager – I had more experience, way more, than both of them, and I was older than them (Becky).

One assistant was very good at her job, and would do all sorts of things to go out of her way to help other [co-workers], but would never do anything I asked her (Gus).

And it was such a battle. Because they [management] were quite satisfied that the position in [department] met my needs and that's where they could stow me away for the rest of my career (Carrie).

Some of it spilled over into leaving the most difficult work for me to do...of course it made my stats drop...mine started dropping down because I was left with those jobs (Diana).

He put up so many barriers to me – such as going through my supervisor, removing my duties, having to copy my e-mail...But then he removed me from the leadership team (Izzy).

From the above description, it is evident the message of ostracism was very clearly communicated to the participants. There were not situations where a participant was ostracized in only one way. All of the participants provided multiple examples of how ostracism was communicated. Further, this illustrates the intentionality of the ostracism, which is unique to studying persistent ostracism at work. It is difficult to interpret these behaviours as accidental, given the repeat and pervasive manner in which they were communicated.

In these sections, I have identified four specific ways that ostracism is enacted at work that have not previously been included. The detailed descriptions from the participants illustrate the ways in which they were told that they were not wanted and did

not belong. As well, two of the ways ostracism was communicated, left out of meetings and removal of job duties, are workplace specific.

The participants not only described how they were ostracised at work, they also provided very comprehensive descriptions of the consequences of the ostracism. The next section highlights the narratives from this study which are new and unique within ostracism research.

5.2 Themes: Consequences of Persistent Ostracism

A number of themes relating to the lived experiences of ostracism emerged and will be discussed with further examples in this section. The themes are presented to provide a solid and comprehensive view of the consequences experienced by the participants directly as a result of persistent workplace ostracism. Only the themes which make a contribution to the existing research on workplace ostracism are presented in this section. A discussion will follow this section which presents the comparison between the laboratory and lived experiences.

The consequences are interrelated and difficult to separate from one another. Further, there is overlap within and between the themes. In many cases, one of the results of the ostracism (for example, loss of self esteem) was very closely related, if not indistinguishable from others (for example, anxiety, isolation). The examples that are provided could have also, in many cases, been provided in another section. The

examples have not been repeated, in an attempt to provide a clear indication of the consequences, which would not occur with repetition. However, in many of the examples the connection with other aspects of ostracism is apparent. Like many human experiences, it is very difficult to compartmentalize a complex human reaction, emotion or thought (Blackhart et al., 2009).

The consequences have been grouped into three main themes: emotional, social and professional. Within the emotional consequences, questioning and blaming self; anxiety, nervousness and dread; and depression and feelings of hopelessness and sadness are included. For the social consequences, these are grouped into loss of confidence and self-esteem; isolation within and outside of the workplace; and disruptions of healthy behaviours. The final theme is professional consequences which includes work performance and a desire to find alternative employment.

There are two other significant themes from this study. One is the long-term impacts of ostracism, and the other is the experience of irrelevance. These two themes are separate from the others as they warrant their own category as they highlight the unique consequences of persistent workplace ostracism. They will be explored after the three themes. The description of how the themes were identified is presented within the previous chapter on methodology, in narrative analysis.

Theme 1: Emotional Consequences of Persistent Ostracism

In previous studies of ostracism, a negative impact on mood and emotion has been identified. While individual studies of acute ostracism did not always result in a negative

emotional response, the meta-analyses have identified this trend. These discrepancies were discussed in Chapter 2.

This study presents a significantly stronger emotional reaction, so strong that in some cases it has resulted in the identification of a mental health issue. These descriptions of the emotional consequences highlight the spill-over from work to home, which is another result that has not been previously identified. The inability of the participants to contain the impacts to the workplace also highlights the severity of the emotional consequences.

The emotional consequences are broken into three subsections: questioning and blaming self; anxiety, nervousness and dread; and depression, and feelings of hopelessness and sadness. Each of these subsections will be explored in more detail with examples from the participants.

Questioning and Blaming Self

This emotional consequence is placed first in the sequence as it was one area in which each participant had struggled. As previously mentioned, all participants were, to some degree, surprised that they became ostracized, as they had not previously had such an experience at work.

Initially, many participants questioned what was happening, wondering if they misinterpreted, misunderstood, or personalized a situation. As ostracism behaviours can be subtle, most participants questioned, at least at first, if they were being ostracized.

Even to this day I ruminate about work and my situation and how I could have handled it differently...But I was already so down and was getting so many messages saying that I was the problem that I started to believe I was the problem (Gus).

And I kept working on trying to be a good co-worker with her and a good person with her and she just didn't want it (Brenda).

But then I think that I say to myself 'if I would have learned more or understood more then this wouldn't be an issue' (Sarah).

Anyway, so I kept sending e-mails like 'I don't know why you're unhappy with me, I hope we can resolve this' (Fran).

But it was really when she [co-worker] came that I got to realize it wasn't me. Until then I had really thought that I was the problem. You may be the victim but you really think that you are somehow deserving of this. Maybe I'm not pulling my weight, I'm not making my sales, I'm not making commission, I must be the issue. It was really messed up...Being left on your own brings you back to wondering 'what have I done to bring this on myself?'...This is when I knew there was a problem. The first time around, I blamed myself and figured it was just all in my head...I thought it was my fault, and that I was responsible for fixing it (Michelle).

Yes, I thought it was me. Because there were so many people I figured it can't be everybody else, its got to be me or something I'm doing. Like, what am I doing to make them not like me or to think I'm irrelevant here – I must be doing something – because it was a lot of people in that area. It wasn't just one person...It was like, 'Gosh, I don't know why these people don't like me'. I just don't know what I did (Jessica).

Absolutely. That was the first thing I thought – what did I do? Everything was okay, I was working harder than ever, it was painful. That was the first thing I thought – what did I do (Izzy).

That kind of treatment leaves you feeling like there is something wrong with you – I didn't think there was. I had never had anything happen to me before like that.

Your friends and family will tell you that it isn't you and you aren't to blame but there is always that little voice that tells you 'maybe you didn't handle it right' or 'maybe you did something' (Diana).

Sometimes I would think after coming home like "is it something I said or did?" Because, you know, it always comes to the self, you sit and examine "is it something that I did or did I do something wrong, was it something I said? (Jana).

Anxiety, Nervousness and Dread

The two most significant mental health issues that arose were anxiety/rumination and depression. For most participants, these consequences went hand-in-hand. Most of the participants experienced one or both of these symptoms. Beginning with anxiety, this was expressed in terms of worry, rumination, fear and dread. While difficult to separate entirely from the physical symptoms and depressive symptoms, here are the illustrations of anxiety/rumination:

My bus ride there was long and then I would get there and think 'okay, let's see what happens to me today'...I was really scared. It was really weird. I was in my 30's at the time but I was scared – it was weird'...I felt so edgy too – so edgy because I didn't know what I was doing that was wrong (Jessica).

I had a panic attack...And I was working out of fear that people were going to report me. I was afraid for my job security...But I knew I wasn't healthy and I knew I probably shouldn't have even been working – and I would get so skittish...I was thinking 'wait, I'm only supposed to work 4 hours a day but I'm considering work stuff for 24 hours a day, this can't be right'...I have anxiety disorder and panic attacks about work. Partially because of all the ruminations and anxiety attacks, if the phone rings I feel like I'm hanging from the ceiling (Gus).

You wake up in the morning with that free flowing anxiety...I didn't even realize why I was panicking, it was just one of these where I couldn't handle the

change...But I was sweating and it was nuts (Fran).

It's a horrible way to start the day – the anxiety knowing he is there was enough to make me want to vomit...Anytime I thought of work. It was like a virus, a thought would come up and it would just trigger this response – a real life fear or anxiety, however you want to term it (Izzy).

I leave here in tears some days...I even had gone to my doctor and asked him about stress leave...When I initially went for counseling it was for work and personal, and even though now some is not work related, it ends up being more work related as I vent things that have happened...But this has affected me emotionally on a different level – they [friends] just go to work and don't like their job, but it's not that I don't like my work, it's the workplace that is toxic and cancerous for me (Carrie).

But these minor psychological things were making me so scared in my mind...It was a constant fear...So after every workday I would come home in the afternoon and I would think about every little thing...Over and over again, and then you go in in the morning and you see the same person and you come back again and it's the same thing. So you can obviously feel distracted and not in a happy frame of mind...It's only until that relaxation comes that shows you how stressed you've been. Because if you're stressed everyday it becomes so baseline (Jana).

I feel really afraid for work...all of the things of great anxiety. The more anxious I'd get the more my (pre-existing condition) would flare up...Even if you're out of work or on holidays you just think about how much time it is until you have to go back. I would just dread getting up in the morning and dread going to work (Diana).

Depression, and Feelings of Hopelessness and Sadness

Another frequently described result of workplace ostracism was depression. There was overlap between the description of anxiety and depression, which also linked to isolation. This section will focus on descriptions of experience related to sadness, hopelessness and despair.

Kind of like a heavy depression... There were a lot of tears and uncertainty... just feeling very trapped and that I had no options... nothing to utilize... The depression of not wanting to get out of bed was intense, it was as if I was pulling heavy weights to just get out of bed, look presentable, and get out the door (Michelle).

I became pessimistic at one point – a month or two was just depression... A couple of months of ‘why me’ and ‘I’m no good’ and ‘I’m not worthy’ and just taking it all internally (Izzy).

I became quite depressed. Even when I used EAP I didn’t tell them everything. I was so ashamed (Diana).

Well, I was obviously very depressed, it was psychologically very depressing (Jana).

I leave here in tears some days... I went to my doctor and it was in December, and I left work in tears and went straight there – I don’t even remember what happened that day but it was just sort of a culmination of all of it – you know, everybody has a breaking point. I’m sure they’re [management] aware of it; I wouldn’t even want to admit to it, to give them the satisfaction of knowing. I would never let them see – I go to work, I turn it on, and internally I’m dying (Carrie).

I definitely do think there was a depression, maybe not a clinical depression, but I was definitely not a happy person (Fran).

I was at home crying one night because I felt I wasn’t going to be successful back at work... I started to feel very alone – just completely alone. I already had low self-esteem from depression... My mental health went straight downhill... I guess that’s a form of depression (Gus).

It was awful, it was very mean and I didn’t want to do anything... I felt really lost and felt like I had no meaning, I felt so timid to talk to anybody, I was always scared to ask anybody anything, I just had no – I was lost. That’s how I felt, really lost (Jessica).

These three categories of emotional consequences provide a comprehensive view of the struggles of the participants, which far surpass the laboratory description of

‘negative mood’. The complex nature of self-esteem, anxiety and depression is represented within the quotes from the participants. Also mentioned in this section is the duration of these consequences. This will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Theme 2: Social Consequences of Persistent Ostracism

The social impacts of ostracism are another unique finding to this study. As previous studies have focused on more acute situations, the full picture of the social consequences has not been identified. For example, while some workplace studies have examined ways to reconnect with the workgroup, they have not identified the interpersonal aspects of ostracism, such as how relationships are affected. The narrative nature of this study has resulted in a comprehensive picture of how ostracism impacts relationships and supports, both inside and out of the workplace.

Loss of Confidence and Self-Esteem

A theme that arose from the interviews related to blaming self was a decrease in both self-confidence and self-esteem. The vast majority of the participants not only questioned or blamed themselves for the ostracism, but they also felt the impact of reduced self-efficacy. This section illustrates the short-term impacts on self-efficacy. The long-term impacts and those which relate specifically to employment will be discussed in Theme 3: Professional Consequences.

Your self-confidence is like – you know what – it doesn’t matter how much you know the other person is nuts, you wake up in the morning with that free-flowing

anxiety of ‘wow, maybe I really don’t know what I’m doing, maybe I’m really not good at my job, maybe I really can’t write, or can’t gather information, you know, or make decisions based on reality, maybe I don’t work hard enough’...I think it caused a lot of self-uncertainty, you start questioning whether you’re doing anything well, like if you can make any decisions at all. Like, maybe I shouldn’t buy this car. Who knows, I might have lost my evaluative function, I’m not evaluating information apparently (Fran).

I began to second-guess myself about whether or not I was doing a good job and concerned about whether I was going to keep my job...Defeatism, self-confidence decline (Becky).

Even though I was ready to work I still wasn’t confident as a person. During the ostracism I felt like I had no self-worth, no confidence, no esteem...I felt questioning of my ability to do my job. I had no self-esteem at that point (Gus).

You second guess yourself, right? You second-guess when you do something, and during my years of learning, one thing I learned is to go with your gut because usually your gut is right, but you still second-guess yourself (Marjorie).

Because I really was very insecure...It was draining – because it just drained your motivation and lack of self-esteem (Jessica).

My confidence still isn’t 100% ...I was dull, bare-boned, low self-worth (Izzy).

Isolation: Within and Outside of the Workplace

The next common social consequence relates to isolation. This is linked with confidence and self-esteem as it determined the desire to engage with others. As a result of the ostracism, participants felt isolated, not surprisingly, at work. However, many participants also discussed isolation outside of work. This was due to many factors, with depression, exhaustion and stress being mentioned frequently. The lack of support, both

inside and outside of work is also considered in this area a main contributing factor, or result of, isolation. Examples of isolation at work include:

It became that he would talk to co-workers and wouldn't let them e-mail me directly; all of my e-mails had to be copied to my supervisor, no one was allowed to go through me (Izzy).

I do keep avoiding her and exiting out of the situation as much as possible, but it makes it more obvious...I leave the situation whenever she enters. I leave; I try not to work her as much as possible. I try to take my lunch break and do stuff that is not work related so I can get a bit of a break from work (Brenda).

My manager then moved me completely off site, and moved me to an entirely different building. To me, that was the wrong thing to do because I was so alone – not only was I out of the group, I was out of the building. I felt embarrassed because I was sharing office space with totally unrelated people and I found it horrible (Diana).

It was as if I didn't even want her [the supportive co-worker] to be associated with me because I didn't want her to have any sort of repercussion. Perhaps she could be in the line of fire if she was associated with me – that's how tense it got...I felt like I was siloed. This was tough because the job was not set up to do in isolation. You're supposed to have your colleagues there if you need to ask questions. So, you're left doing your work without being entirely sure what you're doing – which is very stressful. My co-workers, if they had questions, they would just work together. Being left on your own brings you back to wondering “what have I done to bring this on myself? (Michelle).

But it has gotten to the point now where I don't really associate with people [colleagues] outside of work. So, I walk straight in the door to the inside of the building, walk straight to my truck and then I leave. That's how I managed it (Carrie).

The other form of work isolation discussed was not having any support or very limited support at work, from those in positions of power. A number of participants

spoke about a lack of options in order to receive assistance from supervisors or the Human Resources department. As some of the ostracizers were managers and those who worked in the Human Resources department, that compounded the isolation. The majority of participants experienced a lack of support on many levels, leading to increased feelings of aloneness and social isolation.

Everyone wanted to tiptoe around things because they wanted to protect their jobs or their kids or their responsibilities. Everyone was kind of fearful...after I gave my resignation I wanted to put it on the table – she [Human Resources staff] asked why I was leaving and I told her exactly why. She asked what could be done better within the company and I said that I had been working in isolation. I never got any help...I needed you guys when I came in here, but I don't need you guys now...This idea that 'we can treat anyone how we want because we'll get away with it. She has no support from the manager and we don't support her so we can be rude to her and be disrespectful towards her and it's okay'....There were so many situations where people chose to be observers because they didn't want to be in the line of fire no matter how poor the treatment became...*[Question – So there were other people with equal organizational power to her who said nothing?]* Absolutely. They could have if they wanted to, but they didn't want to get in her way so they didn't...so, everyone knew what was going on, and no one wanted to get involved – they would just judge in silence” (Michelle).

She [the manager] absolutely refused to be involved. I told her many times how upset this was making me and how I didn't think this was what my job would be – this mess (Diana).

I didn't trust anybody in upper management over there...Just the way things were operating throughout the management at that time - I felt like I couldn't trust anyone (Becky).

Because I feel like my manager isn't supportive, so complaining isn't going to help anything. It is only going to make it worse...No, they are just like my manager. They are ineffective and if I say anything they will probably just turn against me...it might get worse, but mostly just that they weren't supportive of

me – management or HR – they wouldn't deal with it appropriately (Brenda).

And a couple other people were initially supportive of me, but they actually just became bystanders and just joined the clique against me (Gus).

I went to my boss, and was told quite unequivocally that there was nothing he could do – that's how she was – 'suck it up' ... I think for him it was just easier to do nothing than to do something. He was not a big confrontational type of guy...so it was easier [for the manager] to do nothing (Marjorie).

Managers treated staff awful in other units, but nothing was ever done about it, because everyone was scared to go to HR. HR wouldn't do anything about it, and then your manager would find out. Everyone was scared... You couldn't trust anyone. You didn't know who was friends with whom. You heard about these managers who were mean to other people, including publically and nothing was done about it (Jessica).

[Question – what about your supervisor – what role did he play?] He came into the scene about 8 months afterward and he just followed the CEO – everything he said. If you followed you were in, you were safe (Izzy).

While few participants found support within the workplace, the majority reached out to family and friends. Some found support from these sources, and others did not. Additionally, there were those who initially found support but it was not sustainable in the long-term. The perception of lack of support, or meaningful understanding from family and friends contributed to further isolation.

That was a critical point – to have that outlet outside of work. That external support is something I've been developing throughout...so, if you were having problems at work it wasn't really a conversation to be had that could go 'People aren't treating me nicely', it would be more like 'Well, it's a job, what do you expect?' ... I was living on my own, and I would talk to my family, but I find that people don't really understand unless they've experienced it themselves...I'm

always the type of person to deal with my issues on my own so I don't really open up to others (Michelle).

Friends didn't even want to hear it anymore and it's understandable"...My poor husband had to put up with a lot – it made him angry. He was very supportive, of course, but it ended up being one of those poison things that stays with you all of the time (Diana).

Kind of got paralyzed to do anything – you stop talking to people, they'll say, 'how's work?' and you just say 'fine'. Even with your partner it becomes hard to talk about...It was definitely impacting my personal life. I was hot tempered, short-tempered, ratty, irritable (Fran).

I am withdrawing from people in my personal life because I just don't feel like they will understand...I'm withdrawing from her [friend] too because she keeps trying to fix it and she can't. I don't want her to try to fix it, I just want her to let me vent...I feel like if I talk to my family about it they won't get it – if I talk to my friends they won't get it – I just don't trust them and I'm tired of people (Brenda).

You just didn't complain about work where I come from...you go to work, and you stay at work. So, I thought 'okay, if I complain about work I'm not going to get any family support here' (Jessica).

[Question – During that time, where did you get most of your support?] I didn't – nothing from anyone (Marjorie).

It was hard on them [the family], because I wasn't present. I would unload a lot of it on them. This is what happened today. My husband would get upset; I would try to leave it outside, on the tree, then in the morning I would pick it up. I knew I had to release it, I can't release it at work (Izzy).

He's [husband] the one that told me to quit. He's told me a couple of times to quit...I just try to go to work, do my job, go home and leave my job at work...My kids can also tell if I come home from work, they can tell if I've had a particularly awful day...they will just come and hug me – which actually makes cry more. But, you know, they get it (Carrie).

As a result of the workplace ostracism, some of the participants no longer felt able to engage in activities after work, and began isolating not only from family, friends, but also from activities they previously enjoyed. Motivation to engage in social events or other daily routines were impacted. This isolation was accompanied by other unhealthy behaviours, which will be explained in the following section. Examples of this isolation include:

It's kind of like 'oh what's the point, let me just sit at home.' It's dark, it's terrible, I'd rather just sit at home, I don't want to do anything (Jessica).

Just watch TV – try to forget about it or at least not think about it...I am withdrawing from people in my personal life because I just don't feel like they will understand (Brenda).

I don't even go to certain restaurants anymore because I know people from work go there or used to go there... My daily activities outside of work were totally engaged in the situation and feelings – it was 24 hour misery (Gus).

I don't think I was fully engaged in life because I was just so consumed by the negative feelings (Diana).

If it drains me mentally then everything else just kind of falls apart. If it affects me mentally then everything else in my world is shot...Even if you enjoy doing something – I just didn't understand the importance of doing something else. All I would do is go to work and then go to bed (Michelle).

Disruption of Healthy Behaviours

While it may not initially appear to be a direct social consequence, persistent workplace ostracism also produced noticeable signs of distress in the participants. Some

of these manifested as a decline in healthy living activities or engaging in life outside of work, as previously described. Additionally, participants frequently mentioned physical health issues, sleep disturbances, unhealthy eating choices and other maladaptive coping mechanisms. These signs of distress further compounded the isolation.

I went off sick again, I was hospitalized and then I stayed off sick...Sleep disturbances, eating...I have to keep a fairly healthy lifestyle but I stopped doing it. I was probably drinking too much, I would have a glass of wine, I wasn't [exercising] as much...Oh yeah, that sort of frustrated – you can't sleep and there's all kinds of stuff on. I have enough trouble sleeping anyway (Fran).

I was eating take out and junk, I was on the computer all night and wasn't sleeping. I got to the point where I would hit my alarm and keep snoozing it until I had to rush to work without eating breakfast. I would get to work frazzled and unprepared...Not eating and not sleeping, not getting good sleeps, not helpful sleeps....And even physically, I was in shape, but quickly got out of shape and wasn't exercising (Gus).

I did eat more, and then of course you don't feel good, then because I'm eating more and eating more junk food...But you don't even feel like making yourself a nice meal – it's just like 'I'll grab anything'. It's not a nice feeling at all (Jessica).

That constant state of unrest. You know when something bad is going to happen and you're just stressed – you're tight – you don't function nearly as well...I'm already slim, but when I get stressed I lose weight and I became very skinny. If I ate she [ostracizer] would make rude comments about skinny people. At the time I didn't know I was losing weight because of stress, so I couldn't equate her behavior to my physical issues...It affects your whole life. I was actually trying to conceive at that time and it certainly didn't help any...I don't sleep well to this day (Marjorie).

At the time it was nothing but stress. I started over-eating. This is how people develop substance issues – they go home and they probably aren't the most present parent or spouse because it takes so much energy to get through the day...for me it was over-eating...My weekends were spent foraging for food and bringing it to bed and not leaving because I was so drained...Eating was my coping. From work I would go get take-out and then go home...That's when I started getting physical issues and had to go see my doctor. This reached a new

level of stress when it became physical. It was one thing when I thought it was in my head, but it's another thing when your body is responding to it... This time I'd go home, wake up at 2 a.m. I was always exhausted. I'd go to bed at 8 or 9 p.m. and have a heavy feeling of exhaust. But, I pushed myself and I would always go to work despite being so tired... But then I started having stomach issues, acid reflux, muscle spasms, and I would sit at my desk and my heart would pulsate... But it was crazy between the physical ailments and the stress, people could notice, it was too much... All I would do is go to work and then to bed. I didn't have the energy to eat properly. To make a nutritious meal was too much work. I knew I was only going to get 2-3 hours of sleep so I just wanted to sit around until I fell asleep (Michelle).

It would be horrible, I can't imagine it now but at the time you are trying to look at everything to keep going – just to keep yourself together... The thing is you're always thinking about it. On your way home, driving back from the workplace, and then once you're home you're not free from your workplace. It's constantly in the back of your mind and it's always nagging you and you can't relax... so there was never a time you would ever feel relaxed... Sleep... but the thing is when you go to bed you're thinking about that ...so you go to bed with that thought, even when you're in bed you're not relaxing, and you drift off to sleep thinking 'oh, tomorrow she is going to be there' (Jana).

I couldn't sleep, I got diarrhea (Diana).

The social consequences of persistent ostracism are multi-faceted. From the above descriptions, it is clear that ostracism at work impacted the participants in many unexpected ways. The three areas identified all worked together to compound the impacts. It would be difficult to say which impacted first. The self-confidence may have reduced the desire to be social, the isolation may have decreased the self-esteem, unhealthy patterns may have encouraged further isolation and may also have decreased self-efficacy. This also illustrates the complex nature of ostracism, as one consequence does not exist independently.

Theme 3: Professional Consequences of Persistent Ostracism

Prior research on workplace ostracism has focused on performance measures which are important to organizations, such as productivity and commitment. From examining lived experiences, different professional consequences become the focus. However, these consequences, while damaging to the individual, are equally damaging to organizations.

Work Performance, and a Desire to Find Other Employment

As a result of the negative impacts from workplace ostracism, most of the participants believed that their work performance was affected. Whether it was from isolation, emotional instability or physical health items, the impact of being ostracized had significant negative performance outcomes.

But she wants to avoid working with me so I just try to avoid working with her as much as possible, but it's not the most effective way to work...Sometimes I get distracted thinking about it at work or at home (Brenda).

I knew I wasn't functioning at a high level. I was there but I wasn't functioning at a high level...I knew my performance was suffering...But I was already so down and getting so many messages saying that I was the problem that I started to believe I was the problem...I knew I couldn't even do my job anymore (Gus).

Sometimes I don't feel motivated and I don't feel engaged – I feel 'why bother' – but at the end of the day I have a job to do that I have to get done but I fall behind because I get so unengaged or so withdrawn that I'm not putting forth my best effort (Sarah).

Maybe I'm not pulling my weight, I'm not making my sales, I'm not making commission (Michelle).

Labour market conditions, financial pressures and lack of other equal status or wage employment opportunities have required that some participants remain in the workplace and continually subjected to the ostracism. Obviously, the negative impacts continue for these participants. They are either looking for other employment, or have resigned themselves that this situation will continue:

Unless they change the entire top management of the company, it will never change (Marjorie).

Ingrained in me – definitely a mode of survival [to keep working]... Tomorrow I'm going to wake up – no matter what happens today – and my kids are still going to need me for certain things, and I'm still going to be there. There are certain things that I don't let affect me so deeply that it affects the people who depend on me (Carrie).

After work I try to not think about work and do other things I have to do – part of my coping strategy is to really get another job. Also, to just think about my own personal things other than my job (Brenda).

I just decided to just stay put, but obviously I will keep my eyes open for opportunity (Sarah).

Some of the quotes above represent many of the previously studied consequences of ostracism: turnover intention, reduced organizational commitment and citizenship, and lowered productivity. However, my data also indicates organizational impacts that have not been considered: reduced self-efficacy resulting in poor decision making, reduced daily motivation, reduced cognitive abilities, reduced coping skills, to name a few. Not only are these consequences for organizations, they are also compromising individuals.

There are two consequences of persistent ostracism that also are unique to this study, namely the identification of the longer term impacts on individuals, and the experience of irrelevance. Neither of these areas have been examined previously, but they are unique to persistent ostracism, or perhaps a natural outcome. It may not be reasonable to think that for months, or years, an employee could be left out and ignored without suffering long term, possibly permanent damage.

Theme 4: Consequences of Persistent Ostracism – Long Term Impacts

The majority of the participants spoke of the long-term impacts of workplace ostracism and how leaving the situation does not remedy the symptoms. For some who have left the workplace or workforce entirely, the symptoms still remain months and years later. This is a very concerning pattern that most participants have experienced.

It's not something you can shake. Even ten years later it hurts. It's intentional [the ostracism]...I look back on it – I would say they (negative self-thoughts) lifted. But, you're just not really sure what happened. I hadn't addressed them. You're still fearful that it could happen again. You have a 'looking over your shoulder' mentality where you think, 'I'm not sure what I did but I don't want it to happen again'...These situations aren't something that you forget...Physically, no – I don't have spasms or stomach issues; I don't wake up crying, but mentally, yes. You don't forget and that is what people don't realize, that their behaviour is actually going to impact someone for a while. You don't forget these things (Michelle).

You know what – that took a really long time. A really long time because I always felt insecure. I'm older now and it's been a really long time...a really, really long time. That took a huge impact on my self-esteem...Yeah – even now, just the other day at work I felt it (fear of ostracism) walking across for that

meeting, even though that isn't what happened, I still thought, 'oh no! It's starting all over again'. It's scary. It hasn't [started again], but I always know that it could. I'm scared to move anywhere or go anywhere, because right now I'm in a safe place and a safe work environment. What if I decide to move somewhere – is that going to happen again? (Jessica).

Yes, my confidence still isn't 100%, but I do love where I am now – it's fantastic. I don't have anxiety anymore though; I was having it every day. I could really feel the pressure. If I were to see him [ostracizer] again – it gives me a fear and I shouldn't be feeling that way. I know it isn't realistic to be afraid of somebody, but he made things so tense. That's how it manifested itself (Izzy).

It made me a very angry person – for five years that has been there and it's taken a long time to settle down and even get my [pre-existing health condition] under control again...I'm doing well, but it's there and it affects my cognition and other things...I think you should know that when you're ostracized in your place of work, and management doesn't do virtually anything about it, that it can destroy yourself psychologically and physically (Diana).

But, I think it psychologically scarred me and then I got my first paid position at another not-for-profit organization and you wouldn't believe it, I was so scared to even have to report to work because of the way the previous manager had behaved. It was so much playing on my mind, you know? I was so scared...But it took me about 8 to 10 months to get over that fear and that psychological worry that not all managers or not all people are bad, you know? It's very, very psychologically and emotionally scarring (Jana).

Even to this day I ruminate about work and situation and how I could have handled it differently...*[Question: That was many years ago and you're still feeling the effects?]* Yes – for sure (Gus).

Definitely some stress related stuff – I don't think it was PTSD or anything, I don't think long-term from now that I'm going to be all stressed out with stuff, but I'm definitely not as confident as I was in things. I'm not confident that people will attend to what I say in a respectful way, that might be part of it (Fran).

The experience of persistent workplace ostracism appears to alter the participants' world view, at least temporarily if not permanently. This potential longstanding impact

highlights not only the severity of consequences for the employees, but also for organizations.

You're still so fearful that it could happen again. You have a 'looking over your shoulder' mentality where you think 'I'm not sure what I did but I don't want it to happen again'... You don't forget – and that is what people don't realize, that their behavior is actually going to impact someone for a while. You don't forget these things (Michelle).

I was out of commission for almost two years but regardless I thought 'there is no way I can look for another job.' I probably couldn't get the same rate of pay and I had no idea what I would say in another job interview regarding why I left or what happened (Diana).

I had to drive down around the old work area tonight and I could almost feel the anxiety again... Yes, and I still have not told anybody, and will not tell anybody where I work until I'm ready (Izzy).

I don't trust people – there are a whole bunch of people who I don't trust because I don't know where they stand on the issue (Fran).

When someone else treats you poorly because of how they feel, there is always that little flicker of remembering and going back to how you felt then (Marjorie).

But even now, I didn't think I would have these hang ups...but I still have it in the back of my mind that that could happen again or is happening again even though it's clearly not... That took a really long time. A really long time because I always felt insecure (Jessica).

It should also be highlighted that according to the participants, the emotional pain did not end when the ostracism ended. Many participants spoke of needing months, even years before the acute anxiety, depression and fear subsided. As well, several participants reported that triggers in the current environment can bring up the past feelings. Seeing the ostracizer (both in person and/or 'online'), returning to or near the workplace and even

hearing someone speak of the ostracizer can cause some of the participants to re-experience the feelings of ostracism. While not all participants shared this lasting impact, it was significant enough of a trend to suggest that there may be a trauma component to workplace ostracism. This is a unique finding to this study. Over half of the participants were able to identify both the physical triggers, fear-based thoughts and emotional reactions to reminders of the ostracism. It was these reported characteristics that have prompted the examination of a trauma-based component, which has not previously been explored. This is both an important and concerning finding, which will be discussed in depth in the Analysis chapter under Trauma Responses.

The long term consequences of persistent ostracism appear to be related to the duration and intensity of the experiences, which resulted in many consequences which impacted the entire life of the employee. This experience was described by the participants as inhumane, torturous and relentless. It is therefore not surprising that the recovery from such an experience would be a complicated process.

While prior research identified a loss of meaningful existence, this study is identifying a result which is far more severe: Irrelevance. Irrelevance is related to both the intensity of persistent workplace ostracism, and perhaps the most concerning outcome, de-humanization.

Theme 5: Consequences of Persistent Ostracism: Irrelevance

One final impact from workplace ostracism, which was shared by many participants, was the experience of being irrelevant. This description went beyond the

experience of being ostracized, feeling lonely or depressed or isolated. It was described as a feeling that one is less than a human being, who is without purpose or use.

This section is last not because it is unimportant. Rather, irrelevance is last because it represents the existential threat, the dehumanizing feelings and thoughts associated with persistent ostracism. As well, it may represent the final outcome of persistent ostracism, a position of defeat.

What am I doing to make them not like me or to think I'm irrelevant here – I must be doing something. I was completely irrelevant – and it makes you feel irrelevant. Like, I'm a human who was put on earth to participate in society and you're treating me like I don't exist. Yes, like I was really – literally – I was nothing there (Jessica).

There was a comment made during one scenario by my manager who said to me 'I could just pay someone off the street to do your job – you're not something special'...I didn't even hear from them for 18 months [after I walked off the job]. Eventually they phoned me with an inquiry regarding hours I had worked that week or income tax forms and I said, 'I haven't worked there in so long'. Obviously they didn't miss me – it was a good two and a half years before they called (Diana).

But with ostracism you already have landed in that place of not being relevant (Gus).

Being ignored I think – that was the hardest thing...because it is unfixable (Marjorie).

The consequences of persistent ostracism ends with irrelevance because it is the culminating feelings and thoughts as a result of experiencing a persistent, inhumane treatment. The descriptions of irrelevance cast doubt on some of the previous findings of ostracism, in terms of the emotional, mental, social, physical and professional impacts.

Clearly from the participant descriptions, ongoing ostracism at work can be a life altering experience.

5.3 Discussion: The Lived Experience

The lived experiences of ostracism have uncovered unique and unknown consequences of persistent workplace ostracism, as well as expanding the definition of workplace ostracism by providing examples of how ostracism at work is enacted. This section will compare the lived experiences to the results of the previous research. While the focus of this chapter is on the unique contributions of the lived experiences, it is also important to recognize points of congruence and points of departure between the different methodologies of studying ostracism.

As the definition of workplace ostracism has already been compared in this chapter, this section will begin with aspect of work in needs satisfaction: need to belong, meaningful existence and need for control. Aggressive and anti-social responses will be briefly commented on. Finally, the workplace specific outcomes will be covered, including team structures, organizational commitment and job satisfaction. The areas which have already been identified within the themes (self-esteem, emotions, and mood) will not be revisited as a detailed description has been presented above.

The goal of the discussion will be to contrast the lived experiences explored through my data with the (mainly) laboratory results. The reality of experiencing

persistent workplace ostracism is the focus of this study, as it is intended to show the actual impacts on human beings within the context of their daily lives. This reality reflects the ongoing nature of ostracism and the devastating personal costs.

Need to Belong

As identified by Baumeister & Leary (1995), belongingness represents the need to not only obtain and maintain relationships, but also “there is a need for frequent, affectively pleasant interactions with a few other people, and second, these interactions must take place in the context of temporally stable and enduring framework of affective concern to each other’s welfare” (p.497).

Workplace ostracism clearly interrupts this process. Not only does persistent workplace ostracism make it difficult to have frequent enjoyable interactions, but it also results in non-reciprocal, non-productive workplace relationships. Ostracism in itself is isolating and therefore counter to the development of close and caring relationships. Further, participants spoke of a lack of trust, which also impacts one’s ability to form relationships. When pre-occupied with the experience of persistent workplace ostracism, other relationships both in and out of the workplace become difficult to maintain.

I totally understand everyone wanting to look after themselves. I appreciate that they didn’t want to be targeted (Izzy).

All of a sudden everyone was making new alliances and I just didn’t pick up on it quick enough. I don’t even know if I would want to align myself with them either (Michelle).

I just don’t trust them (Brenda).

And a couple other people were initially supportive of me, but eventually just became bystanders and just joined the clique against me (Gus).

The second challenge to belonging is the environmental aspects of workplace ostracism. Participants describe the tone and culture of their workplaces as supporting persistent ostracism, as opposed to supporting a mutually beneficial workplace. The environmental and situational factors impair the ability of the person being ostracized to feel secure.

It was almost like once he started [ostracizing], people thought it was okay to treat people badly and it became normalized... That wolf-pack like mentality began to form (Izzy).

That just feeds into typical office politics, to be in the good books of the manager they will just behave like them – I think that is very negative in office politics (Jana).

It was a company-wide attitude that she [ostracizer] was just like that and we all had to get over it. It made it even more difficult (Marjorie).

It was the culture where they made fun of people and you could see them ostracize other co-workers (Gus).

The participants spoke of favouritism, inaction, micromanaging, mixed messages, and unprofessional behaviours left unaddressed as messages that the environment was unstable or inconsistent. Further, there were no examples of reciprocity. The participants gave descriptions of situations where they went the extra mile but were not recognized, where their accomplishments were minimized or devalued.

Baumeister & Leary (1995) also note “that people try to preserve relationships and avoid ending them” (p. 502). This was certainly true for those experiencing ostracism, as they continued to try to ingratiate themselves or find other ways to fix the relationships. Of particular interest is that some of the participants were trying to maintain relationships, which had never been supportive, respectful or considerate. Yet continually those ostracized attempted to behave in ways that could create or restore belonging, despite clear messages from the ostracizer.

I don't know why you're unhappy with me, I hope we can resolve this (Fran).

I was so polite to her [the ostracizer] – too polite. Never even showed any kind of expression of my attitude in any way (Jana).

In terms of me trying to fix it, then I was wondering why she wouldn't reciprocate it back...I kept working on trying to be a good co-worker with her and good person with her and she just didn't want it (Brenda).

First I internalized it and wondered how I could do better...I would try to talk softly, try to strategize, and then realize that I can't do anything, all I can do is try to make the best of it and just get out (Izzy).

The final important aspect of belonging is resisting breaking the attachment.

While it is proposed that there may be more motivation to maintain rather than dissolve the relationship (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), in the participants' reported experiences, a different picture emerges.

First, when initially experiencing ostracism, all participants reported that they attempted to establish, maintain or repair the relationship. Putting in extra efforts, being polite and friendly, asking what the problem was, and trying to change their own

behaviours were common responses. However, this is where persistent workplace ostracism and occasional ostracism differ. Once it became clear to the participants that they would not be able to ingratiate themselves or improve the relationship, all of the participants wanted the relationship to end, very desperately. Once it became clear that the ostracizer was not going to engage positively, most participants stopped trying. It is also important to note that all participants contended that they still responded in pro-social manners such as smiling, greeting, and being polite, although aware it would not stop the ostracism. As well, most participants also spoke of choosing avoidance strategies in order to cope with the extreme stress that resulted from being exposed to the ostracizer on a daily basis.

The relationship with the ostracizer was not desired for any of the participants, as the behaviours persisted and in most cases, became more severe. However, most of the participants report an attachment to, or a desire to maintain their position due to enjoying the work or the job being part of their career path goals.

For me, I'm very passionate and I invest myself in my work (Carrie).

It was hard to walk away from something that could potentially open up more opportunities for me (Michelle).

I liked my job, I just didn't like the environment (Gus).

I was hoping to stay in [the department] and move up (Jessica).

Some of the participants stated that they stay or stayed out of principle: they shouldn't have to leave because they did not do anything wrong. Others mentioned not wanting to back down and let the ostracizer 'win'.

I'm not a quitter (Diana).

I almost quit. But I said, 'no, you have to stay here and make sure things don't get out of hand again' (Becky).

I didn't want to quit because I said 'you know, I'm not the person who gives up so easily' (Jana).

I kept my focus and having that end game was the only way to get through it (Izzy).

I don't want to let them win that way, I don't want to let them take me down that way (Carrie).

Overall, participants felt that as a result of the ostracism, they did not want to maintain the relationship, either on a personal or organizational level.

Need for Meaningful Existence

Previous studies on ostracism and meaningful existence have all shown, regardless of the method used to induce ostracism, that meaningful existence was lowered (Gerber & Wheeler, 2009). Within this study, the meaningful existence was impacted in a very dramatic way.

Based on the interviews, meaningful existence was virtually destroyed for many

of the participants. While results of previous studies indicate that ostracism causes lower levels of meaningful existence, in persistent workplace ostracism the impact is much more profound. Interviewees describe feeling useless, completely irrelevant, and perceived they were viewed as ‘nothing’. The dehumanizing aspects of persistent ostracism are particularly strong, as many recognized that they were made to feel as if they had no worth or value, were dispensable and replaceable. It is as if the participants were told not only are you not valuable here (as an employee), but also that you are not valuable anywhere else (as a human being).

Yes, like I was really – literally – I was nothing there...I was completely irrelevant, and it makes you feel irrelevant. Like, I’m a human who was put on earth to participate in society and you’re treating me like I don’t exist...I felt really lost and felt like I had no meaning (Jessica).

With ostracism you already have landed in that place of not being relevant (Gus).

They [co-workers] had said ‘I don’t know who I’m supposed to talk to but I know it’s not you’ (Izzy).

Just ignoring basic civility – and it was very strategic (Michelle).

The feelings of being irrelevant or not having a purpose had a deep impact on the participants. Some described being confused as to why their roles were being reduced, others could not understand why they were kept on if they were not wanted or needed. The mixed message of retaining an employee who is not necessary creates confusion and demoralization. For example, the question of why the ostracizers continued to, at times, engage the participant in a positive manner is unclear. The lack of interest, respect, and courtesy is obvious. However, there are still times when the ostracizer approaches or

acknowledges in a pro-social way. Often, this is in social or public situation with others present. As well, there were ostracizers who were managers and could have removed the participant, but chose not to.

Given the opportunity, it seems that many ostracizers take the option of continuing to reinforce the ostracism, rather than leave the individual alone or avoid them. The chance to continue to ostracize, to treat the participant in an intentionally unkind way, further emphasizing a lack of meaningful existence. Many of the participants interpreted the ongoing nature of some behaviours as a means by which the ostracizer continued to communicate that the participant had no value.

These backhanded, undermining things that kept being persistent... It was very primal activity – the mentality of ‘okay, she’s weak right now so let’s not help and support, let’s attack her’ is very alarming (Michelle).

I almost thought it was psychopathic – he was getting a big thrill out of it. You could see his smile when he did this sort of stuff, I really thought he was enjoying it (Izzy).

One afternoon I was in a room across the hallway to use the printer and one of the ladies was sitting there – she looked at me, and threw a book at me when I asked a question (Diana).

It’s not like I was valuable to her anyways, she didn’t even know me (Jessica).

The combination of social and psychological factors represented within the participant quotes related to meaningful existence illustrate much more severe and complex consequences than has been previously identified in the research.

Need For Control

It is important to differentiate between the need for control which is rooted in anti-social responses (such as aggression, punishing someone else or lashing out) and the need to have some control over our social environment (Williams et al., 2003). The focus in this section is the latter.

As workplace ostracism resulted in participants identifying feelings of being invisible or insignificant, the need for control is activated as a means by which to exert some power over the situation or a means by which the person being ostracized demands to be noticed or acknowledged. Previous research has indicated that the need for control is stronger in face-to-face interactions (Williams et al., 2012). This may be attributed to the pressure one would feel to continue the communication. Certainly within the workplace, social interaction must be continued, whether immediately or in the near future.

There were a wide range of behaviours from the participants, which could be classified as restoring control. However, it is also very difficult to differentiate between restoring control and being protective of self. In many of the examples, the behaviours, which increased control, were also intended to increase safety. For example, many participants explained that while the ostracizer would not show basic courtesy (such as saying 'hello'), the participants would continue to acknowledge. This behaviour could be rooted in restoring control, or it could be an ingratiation attempt. As well, it could be rooted in personality or socialization, as compliance with workplace norms, or used to influence others (showing self as pro-social or as a victim). The motivation for the

behavior could be multi-faceted. However, there were examples where the need for control related to making personal decisions about the treatment of others and engagement seemed evident:

Yes, I would always say ‘good morning’ or ‘hello’, or ‘how are you’...I never called in sick, but going to work was very difficult (Jessica).

I give all my input and I make sure I feel part of the team and it’s important to me that I express that (Sarah).

To go to her [manager] with petty problems just made me feel like I needed to buck up and handle it myself (Diana).

That is my personality, if something is broken I would try my best to make it better, and I couldn’t make it better (Marjorie).

Despite that, I would smile and say good morning to her, because I would think that she was not the role model so why would I behave like her (Jana).

I might be assertive, but I would get in trouble for that, I jumped in and took charge. There was a staff meeting and there was a BBQ so I spearheaded it, and I got in trouble for that. It didn’t make sense (Izzy).

I know what and who I could go to. I became a union steward as well. That put me on a whole different plane (Becky).

In addition to trying to find control through engaging with others, asserting themselves or controlling other aspects of work-life, the majority of the participants also report using control as a way to protect themselves and feel more secure, either at work or within their position. For some, this was to avoid provoking the ostracizer, actual physical avoidance, or ensuring they had some ‘proof’ of their efforts. Although the methods by which the participants exerted or attempted to enact this control varied, they

report that the ultimate goal was to avoid further ostracism or feel safer within the situation.

Then he [ostracizer] started getting adversarial – ‘that’s not right, you can’t do that’ – and eventually it was like ‘okay, please skip me’. There was no positive outcome (Izzy).

I kept every iteration of every report that we collaborated on – the changes that we made – my changes and her changes (Fran).

I’m super nervous about coming in late. So now I do everything to try to make sure that I’m not late. Beyond what any normal person would do. I don’t go a half hour early or anything, even if I’m 10 minutes early I tell my husband to drive around the block – I don’t want to go in that building any minutes early (Carrie).

Sometimes, I could, but sometimes it was hard to ignore because it wasn’t always safe for me. Even when they wanted to remove me to put me in a ‘safe place’, it wasn’t [a safe place] (Diana).

I don’t even go to certain restaurants anymore because I know people from work go there or used to go there (Gus).

Some people may have perceived it as me sucking up to her, but I saw it as avoiding friction with my manager (Michelle).

In both definitions of need for control, the participants were actively trying to assert themselves. While they did so in ways that differed from what was expected in the laboratory research, it is clear that persistent workplace ostracism activated control needs.

Aggression and Anti-Social Responses

Responses to ostracism which are not aimed at reconnection with the ostracizer can also be related to a need for control. For example, behaviours that are aggressive and anti-social in nature may also be an attempt to regain an aspect of control. It is thought

that as an individual realizes there is no opportunity or possibility to repair the relationship, that the resulting behavior may be rooted in revenge or ego-protection (Leary et al., 2006). It is further suggested that these behaviours are directly linked with the dehumanizing aspect of ostracism (Bastian & Haslam, 2010; Bastian et al., 2012). The desire to be noticed, regardless of how, is proposed as a strategy to counter the invisibility or lack of acknowledgment associated with being ostracized (Williams, 2007a).

Many of the laboratory experiments found that after ostracism, participants were more likely to exhibit aggressive responses, such as not helping others or inflicting a loud noise (Bailett & Ferris, 2013; Baumeister & DeWall, 2005; Twenge et al., 2007; Warburton et al., 2006). The experiences described in the interviews show the opposite from the laboratory. Participants did not report lashing out, being aggressive, or behaving in anti-social ways. For the majority of the participants, their coping strategies were often ingratiation or avoidance. There were no instances of revenge, aggression or other anti-social behaviours.

The exception was found within the use of the silent treatment. Some of the participants reported stopping speaking to, or avoiding speaking to the ostracizer as a means of communicating disapproval, as a safety or coping mechanism, or in order to minimize further ostracism. Reducing efforts and cooperation could also be viewed as a passive-aggressive behaviour.

The lack of aggressive responses is not surprising, given the context of persistent workplace ostracism. Unlike the experiments, the participants had to see or interact with

the ostracizer on a daily basis. For many of the participants, they worked in very close proximity to the ostracizer, with most sharing a workplace (such as desks in the same room, working on the same floor or utilizing the same work space). For these participants, behaving in an aggressive manner very well may have increased the ostracism, which became a natural deterrent for the participants. As well, the majority of the participants were trying to pacify, manage or avoid negative interactions, not behave in ways which would increase the ostracism. Lastly, many of the participants were too fearful to act.

Interestingly, this is also the main reason that participants presented for not seeking help; they were/are afraid that by speaking up, the ostracism will increase or get worse. Most of the participants stated that they did not file complaints or grievances. Rather, they attempted to minimize contact and become invisible when possible. The lack of action from the participants indicates that the treatment from the ostracizer is interpreted as legitimate within the organizational reality.

I feel like my manager isn't supportive, so complaining isn't going to help anything. It is only going to make it worse (Brenda).

I went to my boss, and was told quite unequivocally that there was nothing he could do – that's just how she was – suck it up (Marjorie).

I remember her saying that she would look into it, but then she didn't get back to me for a long time...and I checked with the manager to see if any discussions had been had – and she said she forgot about it. It happened again, so I went back to her and she said she would look into it...it was a series of excuses that I realized she just didn't want to confront them...no, it got worse...Things got worse every time (Diana).

(Question: Scared someone would find out?) Yeah, that it would get back to them

and I would get fired. I was really scared. It was really weird. I was in my 30's at the time but I was scared – it was weird (Jessica).

I started to feel very alone – just completely alone...but when it came to helping me they were fearful for their jobs – they encouraged me to get a lawyer, they didn't want to speak up (Gus).

From these examples, it is proposed that the persistent experience of workplace ostracism encourages silence. This is a result of both not wanting additional negative consequences and the reality of the context in which the participants were working. Most participants indicated that not only was ostracism condoned (as per examples of others not speaking up), but encouraged by management inaction or perceived probable reaction. The participants believed that if they filed a complaint or used a formal appeal system that the manager would not be supportive and there would be severe consequences. The participants report that workplace ostracism has silenced and handcuffed the employees as there are additional consequences such as future risk of job loss, retaliation and not being viewed as credible.

Anger

Previous research has shown that when ostracized, people experience increased feelings of anger (Chow et al., 2008; Jones et al., 2009; Nezlek et al., 2012; Zadro et al., 2004). The participants in this study did express some indicators of anger but this does not appear to be connected with aggression. Rather the feelings of anger were covering up fear, anxiety and depressive thoughts; although some did express primary feelings of anger:

I was hot-tempered, short-tempered, ratty, irritable... Yeah, it would turn to 'I'm sorry, I don't know why I did that' (Fran).

It was just being angry all the time that I wasn't being included or that I couldn't work or had a harder time working (Brenda).

I was miffed. I was hurt. I was angry. I was a whole bunch of emotional things (Carrie).

It made me a very angry person – for five years that has been there... I don't think I was fully engaged in life because I was just so consumed by the negative feelings (Diana).

He suggested I maybe look for a different job and I was angry because it wasn't fair that I would have to give up the job I love and want for the rest of my life (Gus).

Many participants expressed that they were extremely dissatisfied with the treatment they were receiving, and it might be 'logical' to think that anger would be the dominant negative emotion. Perhaps initially when the ostracism occurred, that was the case, briefly. However, the majority of the participants did not speak at length about being angry. There was more expression of confusion regarding the ostracism than anger, and negative emotions were classified as anxious or depressed.

Group/Team Structure

As workplaces continue to implement team structures, the type of relationships that the organization expects employees to form is an important aspect of this study. While research on teams and ostracism is very limited, it has been suggested that being ostracized from an important group will be more impactful (Bernstein et al., 2010;

Goodwin et al., 2010; Sacco et al., 2014) and working relationships characterized by close proximity, high levels of task interdependence, and those which use group decision making models or when tenure is high, would show more severe outcomes of ostracism (Sacco et al., 2014). It has been suggested that in these situations, ostracism could be devastating. All of the participants reported that teamwork and cooperation were severely hampered by persistent ostracism. They described being unable to freely join in processes at work, having delays in completing work or developing their work skills, and experiencing many complications as a result of compromised group dynamics.

I think that none of them really liked me but there was no connection there, no relation, it's not like they were friends (Jessica).

Nothing I was saying was important and no one found anything I had to offer was important... Since all [teams] were so close and everyone communicated, it just seemed like what one person said, everyone got on board with. One girl from my [team] was probably the ring leader because she was the one who always wanted to pipe up first and say something about me or say something to me, and it just made others seem comfortable with it... They [managers] said they understood I was behind in my work, not getting things done, not being a team player, bringing the morale down on the team (Gus).

But then he removed me from the leadership team. I asked why, he said 'we don't need you – you're of no value' (Izzy).

Since I didn't do these social things with them – like going shopping when we were supposed to work – they saw me as unreliable – and they didn't want me around (Diana).

We are immediate colleagues so we should be working together on a team basis, but this colleague would not include me and not work with me at all (Brenda).

Yes, it was a matter of alliances. If I was on her good side she could maybe help me. That's how it happened – if she liked you she would help you...even if you try to ask your managers they will want you to ask your team members thinking they are helping you build a rapport... You're supposed to have your colleagues there if you need to ask questions. So, you're left doing your work without being entirely sure what you're doing – which is very stressful. My co-workers, if they had questions, they would just work together...I feel like it shifted from us seeing one another as a team to everyone seeing themselves as 'them' versus 'me' or 'me' versus 'new management' (Michelle).

The dynamics of ostracism within a team environment are complex. Close proximity appears to increase the perceived intensity of ostracism experience, as does a smaller group size. The participation or complacency of the manager/team leader also impacts the severity of the consequences, according to the participants. To generalize, participants reported that manager intervention was minimal, resulting in the perceived endorsement of the ostracism in many cases. The inability or unwillingness of managers to take action appears to be one of the factors which supports the spread of ostracism, resulting in additional ostracizers as in-group and out-group divisions become clear. In most cases, participants felt that the end result was an in-group with one ostracized member (themselves) and that they were either lacking the ability to form an out-group, or this option was extremely limited, or short-lived. Other employees who could see the team dynamics were described as aligning themselves with the in-group, which was seen by the participants as further ostracism.

The following examples show how the transition from bystanders who supported the participant became members of the in-group:

It was as if I didn't even want her to be associated with me because after I left I didn't want her to have any sort of repercussion. Perhaps she could be in the line of fire if she was associated with me – that's how tense it got (Michelle).

[Question - When he would skip over you at a Board meeting would any other managers speak up?] They would at first – they would say 'Oh, you missed her', but, they stopped (Izzy).

Eventually the assistants would just give me answers like 'if I have time' or they would get more aggressive like 'we said we didn't have time'. One assistant was very good at her job, and would do all sorts of things to go out of her way to help other [co-workers], but would never do anything I asked her... There was a [co-worker] who had been treated very poorly by my manager and the rest of the group, and a couple of other people were initially supportive of me, but eventually just became bystanders and just joined the clique against me (Gus).

Therefore, not only was the reported experience of ostracism significant within a team structure, but it also increased the likelihood of others to either join the ostracizer or simply remain silent. The view of 'picking sides' appears to be a common pattern, as those who were supportive in some situations, joined with the more dominant members. This may have occurred for a number of reasons: safety, group norms and expectations, risk of ostracism or peer pressure. Regardless of the mechanism, the desire to be part of the in-group is strong.

Workplace Outcomes

Previous research on workplace ostracism have identified likely outcomes related to performance: all negative. In addition to the already discussed areas of self-esteem, anxiety and mood, research to date has also suggested a link with decreased

organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviours and job satisfaction (Hitlan et al., 2006b; Ferris et al., 2008). Within the lived experiences of persistent workplace ostracism, this also appears to be the case with the exception of the components of job satisfaction in terms of the work itself.

In my performance review she [manager] would tell me that I always did very well in terms of customer service and that I was able to do my job very well (Jessica).

Exemplary [performance] – I would always go above and beyond and I was very highly valued (Izzy).

There was only myself and one other woman who took the job seriously and went the extra mile...I still enjoyed the work (Diana).

[My] co-worker said ‘On the contrary, she’s the only one who gets her work done on time’ (Becky).

It’s not my work, I like my work (Carrie).

Consistent with earlier research, the participants did experience a decline in organizational commitment or a lack of citizenship behaviours, as many were searching for new job possibilities:

I have seriously applied for jobs that pay \$10 an hour less, \$10,000 less a year, even \$20,000 less just to try something new – just to get out (Carrie).

I hope you don’t think I’m going to be working here for 15 years (Fran).

Before my leave of absence I noticed I didn’t want to work there anymore, partly because of her...After work I try to not think about work and do other things I have to do – part of my coping strategy is to really get another job (Brenda).

I knew there were external forces beyond my control, that she was on a mission, that my job was slipping away, and that there was nothing here for me. I knew it wasn't me, but I wanted to get out of it with the least amount of detriment (Michelle).

HR treated me poorly – I was shocked – but by the time that started I was already looking to get out (Diana).

My motivation became getting out – that got me into the day, I would work on resumes, stuff like that (Izzy).

This comparison highlights that while the majority of consequences described within the existing research did apply to persistent workplace ostracism, that they were experienced in very different ways. The experiences expressed by the participants of this study were much more intense and far reaching. The impacts touched all aspects of the participant's lives.

Not only did those experiencing persistent ostracism have the impacts the previous research described, they also had the unique consequences that this study identified with the five themes that were presented earlier in this chapter. In addition, this chapter expanded upon the definition and the enactment of ostracism at work. Clearly the persistent ostracism experience has highlighted new areas for continued research.

This information will now be utilized to inform the next chapter, Analysis. The assessment of the participant experiences will be analyzed using a critical discourse lens. This analysis will form the basis for the final chapter, which will present recommendations.

CHAPTER 6 - ANALYSIS

In the previous chapter, *Narratives of Workplace Ostracism*, the experiences of the participants were grouped by themes using narrative analysis. This is a novel contribution to the ostracism literature, as it adds to and expands the definition of what comprises workplace ostracism. The consequences of experiencing workplace ostracism were then grouped by themes which illustrate the consequences of workplace ostracism that had not previously been considered, as well as broadening the understanding of the emotional consequences. This information on both the definitions of ostracism and the consequences of persistent ostracism informed the analysis to be presented in this chapter.

As described in the Methodology chapter, critical discourse analysis was utilized to analyze the power relationships that exist within persistent workplace ostracism. Of particular interest was the location of power, as this represents a significant obstacle to addressing the problem of ostracism at work. In each interview, the participants gave examples of how the ostracism continued, increased and involved others within the organization. They also spoke of organizational resources and support.

Integral to understanding power and persistent ostracism was the perception of the participant, especially in terms of their available alternatives for resolving or reducing the ostracism. As described in the *Narratives of Workplace Ostracism* chapter, in all but one case, this perception centred on the lack of power, often characterized as helplessness, hopelessness or defeat.

These descriptions of power within the organizational context were used to conduct a critical discourse analysis which resulted in three distinct assessments: post traumatic stress disorder traits, abusive relationships and constraints to alternatives for responding. These three categories do not represent all of the power dynamics within the experiences of persistent workplace ostracism, but rather the three most prevalent groupings. The experiences and power based references of all participants were considered in developing these three areas of analysis.

The exploratory interviews offered very rich descriptions of the experience of persistent ostracism. The participants described in detail how the ostracism began, their own thought processes, how they felt throughout the ostracism, the reactions of others, the role of coworkers and supervisors, and an extensive description of the impacts and consequences. There was information provide on the context of the job itself and the workplace, including structure and group dynamics. With 265 pages of data, the details of the participant's lives provided a very comprehensive understanding of how they interpreted, reacted and responded to being ostracized at work over time.

The participant-reported persistent workplace ostracism indicates more extreme results than that of the non-experience based research. Not only does it indicate that within an actual workplace the consequences are more severe, it also indicates that there are compounding impacts involved. For example, measuring self-esteem within a laboratory setting may indicate that ostracism impacts self-esteem negatively. That certainly appears to be accurate from what is currently known about ostracism and self-esteem. However, when self-esteem is examined within the context of persistent

workplace based ostracism, a more comprehensive picture develops. From the interviews it appears that initially, the ostracism creates doubt (Was I just ostracized? Is something else happening here that I'm not aware of?), confusion (What is happening? What is happening to me? Did something change?), and then self-doubt (What did I do? How did I cause this?). This process of determining if ostracism is occurring appears to take time. For some participants, the ostracism started abruptly, for others it was subtler. This repeat questioning and sense making led to anxiety, rumination and other negative emotions for the participants. At perhaps the same time, or after, participants note changes in their self-esteem (Am I doing a good job? Am I capable? What do others see that I don't?). Depending on the context of the ostracism, this process varies in both speed and intensity. In particular, for those who report being ostracized by more than one individual, the message of being ostracized becomes obvious quickly. As well, for those who work in small groups, work teams or in very close proximity (such as cubicles), the message is communicated quickly. In many situations, the sense making process itself became overwhelming as the participants were constantly monitoring behaviours and thoughts.

It is this complex affective, cognitive and social process which has been considered within the analysis. As described by the participants, persistent ostracism at work was not contained to the workplace. It resulted in changes within their home and family life, daily functioning, within important relationships, and for some, it has permanently altered their worldview. It is this comprehensive approach that allows for an analysis which examines multiple locations of power, including non-power.

This chapter begins with a summary of the overall context of the workplaces, with a focus on the stressful nature of the environments, and the constraints which exist. A very brief description of some of the gender based considerations follows as part of the initial assessment. These two summary descriptions are presented to help contextualize the analysis, and includes information not presented in the previous chapters. This is followed by a description of the locations of power. Critical discourse analysis is used to identify both the ways that power was obtained as well as how it was removed. The assessment of locations of power is followed by the three analyses related to power within this study: post traumatic stress disorder traits, abusive relationships and constraints to alternatives for responding.

6.1 Workplace Environment

Stress Factors

Although not mentioned in previous research as a measurable outcome, all participants used the word stress. Within the interviews, it was used as a place holder for emotional, financial, mental, social and physical strain, exhaustion, tension, and preoccupation. Many participants highlighted that the work itself was not very demanding, but that the ostracizing environment was extremely stressful. Further, this stress, while workplace specific in origin, was not contained. The stress was reportedly transferred to all areas of the participants' lives, and it impacted also on the supportive partners, children, family and friends.

While it could be argued that ‘stress’ is a lay-term used to capture many symptoms, there also needs to be recognition of the pervasive nature of what participants called stress. While low self-esteem, anxiety, rumination, physical symptoms and illness are all aspects of stress, there are also parts that are not captured. For example, for the participants, the hyper-vigilance that is created due to anxiety and rumination was not limited to worry about future ostracism. It was also related to other types of worry such as job insecurity, financial instability, and mental health factors. To view hyper-vigilance as only a monitoring of the work environment removes ostracism from the context, which is not limited to activities within the workplace. Rather, the hyper-vigilance was present in the entire life of the individual. Therefore, based on the participant reports, the hyper-vigilance becomes part of functioning inside and out of the workplace. The experience of persistent ostracism may have occurred within the workplace, but the consequences and impacts spread to the interviewees’ private life-sphere.

I will suggest that this is due to the extremely unnatural and dehumanizing aspect of ostracism. Being ignored, dismissed, and otherwise treated as if you are not human and without value is not a location-specific experience. While initially the thoughts of doubt may be confined to the workplace, they very quickly spread to all aspects of the participant’s lives.

Those who were ostracized asked questions regarding likability. What causes the crossover from dislike to discount? Is ‘liking’ even a factor? This is where the complexity of ostracism becomes insidious. Some ostracizers did not like the participants, this was very clearly reported in some situations. However, in other situations there was no time to

determine likability based on interactions. Some participants experienced ostracism before anyone got to know them; others reported relationships that suddenly turned. Did the likeability change abruptly? Were there other factors separate from the specific behaviours of the participants which led to ostracism? For example, did the ostracizer feel threatened or inadequate? Did the participant trigger something for the ostracizer? Was the ostracizer looking for a scapegoat? This list could continue.

There is some presupposition that ostracism functions as a means of maintaining existing organizational norms, and that it is used to ensure appropriate behaviours for performance (Williams & Sommer, 1997). This is the weakest of the explanations or rationalizations from the data within this study. There is no indication that ostracism was being enacted to maintain group performance, as may be the case with a 'free rider' or non-productive worker. Further, approximately half of the participants reported being ostracized by a person with higher levels of organizational power. This means there would be more direct and effective alternative ways to modify behaviour or work performance. Additionally, some participants experienced ostracism already on their first day at work. There is no indication that co-workers and managers would know performance capabilities with a brand new employee. Therefore, the role that ostracism plays is more complex than a simple socially based-power related to workplace performance or pressure.

In all but one situation, utilizing workplace ostracism was described as an accepted means to communicate to certain individuals, and this was reported as supported and perhaps even encouraged by co-workers, managers, and organizations. The

participant talked about organizational norms, which included a strong hesitancy to speak out against ostracism. The ability to enact persistent workplace ostracism appears to be a norm within some organizations supported by supervisors and/or work departments. Further, this support is illustrated by ineffective management, inadequate policy and a lack of awareness and empathy. All participants reported that the ostracism was visible and known by different organizational members, the majority of whom were in leadership positions.

One area where the participants' experiences of persistent workplace ostracism differed from the laboratory research is in the area of anger/aggression as a means to regain control. I propose that this is due to two factors: organizational norms and appropriate gender expression. Within most workplaces, aggressive responses are not tolerated, in particular among professional occupations. The majority of the participants were working in professional administrative or management roles, or as members of a regulated profession. For these jobs, aggression would not be an acceptable behaviour. However, as with self-esteem, the anger/aggressive responses cannot be analyzed in isolation. Many of the participants were also reporting high levels of anxiety and lower self-esteem. In that situation, it would be expected that individuals would react in an inhibited manner. The participants were not feeling confident, were worried about job security, and were not in positions of power in relation to the ostracizer.

The lack of aggression would be consistent with the approach-inhibition theory of power: those lacking in power, confidence and power competence are more likely to become hyper-vigilant (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Keltner, Grunfield & Anderson,

2003) in observing others rather than in pursuing resources. As an individual does not feel adequate, she/he is more likely to retreat from the use of power, that includes aggression. This would be a protective behaviour for those who are experiencing self-doubt, negative emotions and lowered self-esteem. It would be unlikely that someone who is fearing for her/his job and is worried about different life consequences would risk her/his employment. For all of the participants, maintaining a source of income was one of the considerations for sustaining the employment relationship. Responding with aggression, while probably a desire of the participants, may have been far too risky of a reaction.

Gender Factors

Gender stereotypes may also be impacting behavioural alternatives, as all of the participants are female. As aggression is generally not conventionally viewed as an appropriate response for women at work, there may be socially accepted norms at play impacting perceived available options for women (Oakley, 2015). While some of the participants recognized the emotion of anger, there were no reports of aggressive behaviour. There were few examples of assertive behaviours. The majority of the participants reported reacting in ways that would support traditional gender roles: continuing to be polite, offering to help and showing courtesy. As well, these behaviours would also represent pro-social responses to ostracism, continuing to make contributions and acting in a manner that could facilitate the re-establishment of relationships or ingratiation. This would be consistent with the 'tend-and-befriend' stress response

(Taylor et al., 2000). Behaving in a manner that could leave the option of re-establishing the relationship is consistent with this theory, versus the traditional (male) ‘fight or flight’ stress response (Wang et al., 2007).

Another gender finding consistent with Bozen & Yoder (2008) is that the participants all reported making efforts to try to re-establish the working relationships. This went beyond the attempts at ingratiation or co-operation. Many of the participants gave examples of researching ways to improve relationships at work. This was accomplished by reading about bullying and ostracism to figure out how to get along with difficult people and ways to deliver messages. The after-hours efforts that the participants reported to enact to restore or understand the workplace dynamics were extensive. This also included consulting with others and seeking help from a support network. The desire and efforts to re-establish the social bonds at work was evident from the participant perspectives.

However, as only women participated in this study, it is not possible to compare the experiences based on gender. Suggestions for further research in this area will be discussed in the Recommendations chapter.

6.2 Locations of Power

This section will identify locations of both power and non-power. Due to the subject-target dichotomy of ostracism, it is important to recognize both how power is obtained and how it is lost or depleted. This section first examines the participant's perspective of non-power, followed by the organizationally supported power.

Locations of Non-Power

With the exception of two participants, most of those who experienced persistent ostracism reported feeling helpless. The feeling of helplessness originates from two sources: not being able to resolve the ostracism and a lack of power. It was apparent from the interviews that the participants did not perceive that there were helpful resources available to them at work and that the ostracizer had more power within the organization.

Given that over half (7 of the 12) of the participants were ostracized by a supervisor or manager, the lack of organizational or positional power is evident. However, those being ostracized by a co-worker or peer reported feeling equally powerless.

In part, this is due to the other social or network connections of the ostracizer. Some of the ostracizers had a group of peers that supported them, some participated actively in the ostracism, and others participated passively by watching, staying silent or withdrawing from the participant. Therefore, some power resided with the ostracizer in

terms of forming a coalition, where members of a work group or department were clearly on one side or the other, representing a powerful in-group. The formation of a coalition also further isolated the participant, ensuring an additional reduction in power.

However, the true lack of power for ostracized individuals was derived from an affective and cognitive process, which cannot be separated from the ostracism itself. While the lack of positional and social power was clear, a stronger impact on non-power was related to the emotional and psychological treatment endured by the participants.

For example, the majority of participants recognized that they were experiencing extremely high levels of distress, anxiety, depression and self-doubt. Over time, this combined with the isolation, convinced the participants that they were without options. This may in fact have been true. This situation was created by the ostracizer, who through repeated actions had damaged the self-confidence and self-efficacy of the participant. During this process, the ostracizer increased his/her own power, while simultaneously decreasing the power of the participant. By inflicting repeat anti-social behaviours on the participant, the ostracizer is creating physical, mental, emotional and social distress. As this occurs day after day, the participant sees that she do not have any viable options to respond. Further, the psychological nature of persistent ostracism results in helplessness, hopelessness and fear. Like other inhumane treatments, the end result is a lack of power, at both a personal and systemic level. For those being ostracized, this goes beyond a lack of power to non-power. Not only do they not 'possess' any power, they are also acutely aware of their victim status, that they are a target and are largely without any resources to improve or control their situation. The

result is a change in worldview, in which what was formerly a just or fair situation has deteriorated into a reality where there seems to be no hope. As many participants mentioned, not only did they feel and believe they were (are) powerless, this was also reinforced by others. They received confirmation from others that not only were they powerless, they were also without value. The mental and emotional experience of being without power was communicated repeatedly, for most on a daily basis, until the participants became convinced that they were reduced to irrelevant.

This analysis of non-power is part of the Stage 1 critical discourse analysis. It represents the aspects of ostracism which are “detrimental to human well-being” (Fairclough, 2009, p. 167). Further, as the resources of the individual are so severely depleted, this also contributes to the Stage 2 analysis of naming the barriers which exist to try to address the issue of persistent workplace ostracism. The lack of power, as a result of the inhumane treatment creates what may be the most important obstacle. There are many psychological descriptions for this phenomena which support the significance of this obstacle, and form the basis for two of the areas of analysis: post traumatic stress disorder traits and abusive relationships. The idea that ‘if you truly believe that you are helpless, then you are’ is illustrated by self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1968), learned helplessness (Maier & Seligman, 1976) and confirmation bias (Nickerson, 1998). The change in worldview further impacts this barrier, as illustrated in the Narratives of Workplace Ostracism chapter under the long term consequences. The participants were able to identify that some of the powerlessness had become internalized.

Locations of Organizationally Supported Power

Much of the informal or social power used against the ostracized person was increased by group dynamics. Simply forming in and out groups however, does not ensure power. While there can be informal power in numbers, there is also the need for organizationally supported power. In all but one situation, the participants reported that the organization supported ongoing ostracism. This was accomplished in a number of ways: lack of useful resources for those being ostracized, lack of consequences for unprofessional behaviours, lack of action by front-line supervisors, ineffective policies, lack of education and awareness within management regarding ostracism and a lack of motivation for management interventions. While this is not an exhaustive list, it represents many of the ways that organizations locate power that supports ostracism.

Organizational power can be difficult to identify. As complex social systems, the organizational chart is only one, rather simplistic representation of organizational power. Power can be located in many ways, which does not show in a chart. As previously mentioned, there were participants who reported being ostracized by those with legitimate positional power. However, such power does not permit ostracism unless there are other organizational structures, processes or values which support and encourage such behaviours. Most supervisors and managers do not inflict harmful treatment on employees. Further, from the interviewees' descriptions, they do not inflict such treatment on all employees. Rather, ostracism is a select and targeted behaviour. The question then becomes 'What within an organization supports or encourages this behaviour?' and 'How does one employee obtain this type of power?' This section is a

continuation of the Stage 2 assessment of identifying the obstacles. How power is enacted within organizations will be discussed from this viewpoint.

The context of the ostracism is an important factor in addressing this question. Each of the participants worked in a different organization and yet similarities were striking. One of the most pronounced similarities is that the ostracized person was, if not initially, eventually, an out-group of one. For some participants, they were an in-group member that was ostracized to an out-group. Others were never part of the in-group. Perhaps the most striking similarity was that due to the ostracism and the resulting isolation, that the interviewees did not actually belong to an out-group, rather, they were the out-group. This is a unique situation which has not been widely discussed within the social identity theory. In fact, the theory assumes that there will be an out-group which has more than one member and operates as a group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). It is recognized that there will be status differences between groups, and that identity with a group is important for social relationships and personal identity (Tajfel, 1982). The group provides the reference for comparison for the members, evaluating and categorizing similarities and differences (Deschamps & Devos, 1998; Tajfel, 1982). The research on social identity and personal identity focuses on the group dynamics, influences and interpretations which can impact individuals (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Jetten, Spears & Manstead, 1996). However, there is no research on the one-member out-group or the consequence of not belonging to a group. The persistently ostracized individual is therefore in an uncommon situation – isolated from the in-group, but unable to participate in an out-group.

The interdependence of the work group appears to be a factor that supports ostracism. The team or group environment, which is so prevalent in workplaces today, puts additional pressure on workers to cooperate and collaborate (Stevens & Campion, 1994; Zarraga & Bonache, 2005). When high levels of interpersonal skills are required but not consistently present, this creates an opportunity for a powerful ostracizer to emerge. This appears to be enabled by a lack of team leadership. The peer-only or self-managed team leaves room for a member or members to assume socially powerful roles. When this is coupled with a lack of effective supervision, ostracism can easily occur. Further, when other team members see the ostracism and also see that no action is taken by management, it reinforces the power of the ostracizer. It also allows for the continuation of unethical behaviours, as there is no formal leader who is monitoring the use of power, “consequently resulting in decreased motivation to self-regulate ethical decision making” (Galperin et al., 2001, p. 407). This lack of management intervention leads to further ostracism, as the in-group members see that social status is linked with group membership, and an expectation of group member is either to ostracize, or to not oppose the ostracism. “Nonconforming group members have two primary options: leave the group or change their behaviour to confirm to the norms of the group” (O’Fallon & Butterfield, 2012, p. 127). As all of the in-group can see the consequences for the individual that is ostracized, the socially-desirable response is very clear. At this point, “the increased salience of one’s high status group identity will displace or depress one’s moral identity” (Galperin et al., 2001, p. 408).

Research on many organizational behaviour topics highlights the role model aspect of management. There are examples from leadership, ethics, and performance

literature, that demonstrate that followers are most likely to behave in a manner that is consistent with that displayed by the leader (Hannah, Avolio & Walumbwa, 2015; Hunter, Neubert, Perry, Witt, Penney & Weinberger, 2013; Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes & Salvador, 2009; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). Therefore managers who dismiss, ignore or refuse to view ostracism as a serious issue not only compound the problem, they reinforce the power of the ostracizer, to both observers and the ostracized. By failing to act, a manager is still communicating to employees.

Failing to act encourages and endorses behaviours, especially when it occurs repeatedly. The examples from the interviews of managers not taking action or being dismissive were plentiful. Some participants rationalized that the manager did not know what to do within the situation. While this may be accurate, it also is a distinct communication: taking no action means it is not important or significant. By taking no action, the manager leaves the power with the ostracizer. The same occurs when the manager is dismissive: 'don't take it personally' and 'can't you just get along' are examples of how managers passively support ostracism. Not only does it not address the inappropriate behaviour, it suggests that no one is to blame or be held responsible. For those being ostracized, it implies that their behaviours are also contributing to the ostracism. The minimizing of the behaviours also discourages future reporting. The passive responses result in the ostracizer having additional power, and the person being ostracized silenced, which also increases isolation and vulnerability, creating an obstacle for lodging future complaints.

The passive support of ostracizers by managers also sends a message to bystanders regarding power. When those not actively involved in the ostracism also witness a lack of interventions or consequences, it discourages action and re-affirms the power of the ostracizer. Not only does it communicate that the ostracizer has some sort of organizational or social power, it sends a message to bystanders of where they may want their loyalties to lie. Seeing someone being ostracized and management not taking action implies that there is not support for the employee who is ostracized. Attaching oneself to someone that management does not support would be a risky partnership, not only in terms of management support but also peer networks. It quickly becomes evident to employees where the power base resides, and the perceived risks of not belonging. This will also continue to reinforce the salience of the in-group and heighten motivation to continue to comply with the informal in-group norms (Korte, 2007; Tajfel, 1982).

Effective policies, while potentially a means by which someone who is being ostracized could garner power, is only effective if the power structure within the organization supports the use of such a policy. In all but one interviewees' narrative, the policy itself did not possess power. While very few utilized a formal complaints process, this is not because the policy did not exist, rather, it was because the policy itself was not implemented and thus was powerless. This again is an example of the enacted power structure within organizations. While policy may assign neutral steps and processes, the context in which it is executed is not neutral. Participants were unable to give examples of when the policy was effective or successfully utilized by themselves or others. Many made statements referring to those in power in relation to the policy – that their power

and bias made the policy worthless. The power is embedded not in the policy, but in those who enact it.

Therefore, the same power structure is reinforced with policy as it is with day-to-day behaviours: the policy 'works' differently for different people, and those being ostracized do not have enough personal power to utilize the policy. The same biases seen within the workplace were also located within the policy - lacking support within the organization means the policy is not a viable option. Participant perceptions regarding policy were that the process is enacted by the same managers who had already expressed their lack of support. While recognizing that policy was an alternative, it was not viewed by the participants as a helpful option. In fact, a number of participants reported a fear of retaliation and/or future ostracism if they were to make a formal complaint. The participants were convinced that using the policy was likely going to further deteriorate the situation. They believed the policy would be ineffective as the managers were not capable to recognize, identify and intervene in the ostracism. Many stated they had a fear of making things worse and therefore did not file formal complaints.

As with those being ostracized, potential whistle blowers or bystanders, had also witnessed not only a lack of support from management, but an active bias toward some employees supported by the informal power base. The deterrents for speaking up would far outweigh the potential benefits. There are specific risks for the bystanders in terms of potential social consequences. As was reported by Becky, speaking up against the ostracism of a co-worker resulted in her ostracism as a means of retaliation for challenging the ostracizer. These actions, visible by other bystanders, further serve to

reinforce the power base of the ostracizer, legitimately or otherwise. It also reinforces the social importance of the in-group.

Organizational or workgroup norms are extremely powerful. While this study is not able to identify the specific norms within each organization, according to the interviews there are themes that dominate. First, ostracism goes unpunished, formally or informally. Second, ostracizing behaviours are supported, both at the workgroup and management levels. Third, ostracism can be used as a punishment and a way of ‘othering’ and socially shunning an individual. Finally, embedded norms indicate that the organization itself values something other than the human relationship and treatment of employees, such as compliance, profit or lack of conflict. These organizations also support silence which breeds ostracism.

All of these workplace norms are socially constructed. They may exist in a department or throughout the organization. They are created and maintained by those who seek power, and reinforced by those with legitimate power, either passively or actively. The lack of intervention communicates support for a norm as loudly as an intervention. Ostracizing became a norm within some of the reported examples in this study. There were/are many participants who feel alone and isolated from any healthy workplace relationships. Some participants have supports outside of the work group, but these also appear to lack power. The ongoing process of action – interaction – observation of ostracizing creates a norm for informal behaviours. Participants provided many examples of being excluded informally (lunch invitations) and formally (not invited to or notified of meetings). This norm of ostracism is supported by those

participating, managing and silently observing, which enables the behaviour to continue. Once a behaviour is repeated, supported or not discouraged, it becomes a socially-supported norm (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). There were reports from some participants of a history of ostracism happening to others. For example, statements of the ostracizer 'being like that' and stories of other previous employees being ostracized were also common. These suggests that the work group or organization actively encourages the behaviour, and has done so over time.

The participants often stated that management was ineffective in handling conflict or did not know what to do. To resolve complex interpersonal conflicts is difficult, and without proper training and skills, even more so. However, there is also the possibility that the managers wanted the ostracism to continue. This is one of the considerations of the Stage 3 critical discourse analysis, that some may see that there is a 'need' for ostracism. For example, this could be seen as an indirect Human Resources strategy. There were reports of ostracizers from Human Resources as well as managers who would have had Human Resource departments available for consultation. Do organizations use co-worker and manager ostracism as a means to inflict a form of informal discipline, with the end goal of voluntary employment termination? Are the managers actively creating an environment where ostracism is used to make life so unbearable for certain employees that they quit? Do these managers lack the necessary skills to deal with employees in a direct and professional manner so they resort to tactics which harm others? This offers an alternative explanation for the lack of reported action or consequence for ostracism. Has ostracism for employment termination become a social practice in these situations? Has it become, in Foucault's (1980) terms, a prevailing discourse, in which the power is

transferred to those directly in contact with targeted individuals? This perspective is offered as a means of challenging the dominant discourse of managers as neutral and rational beings, working for the good of the corporation. There would be many scenarios in which it could be feasible for a manager to believe that they ‘need’ to utilize ostracism.

The next obstacle to the prevention of ostracism is related to economic power. The participants report being acutely aware of the financial risks the ostracism created. This was another example of how the participants felt powerless. While there would have been policy and legislation protecting all workers from unprofessional treatment, within the context of ostracism it had no power. Participants were concerned with reputation, scapegoating, dishonesty and job loss, regardless of the organizational documents. The shift of power, whether accurate or perceived, resulted in extreme fear. Participants reported that they feared the loss of the job in relation to survival, as most stated they ‘needed’ the job due to financial commitments.

The economic power inherent in persistent ostracism is also invisible but not unknown. The power over one’s employment, or employment stability was one of the largest threats perceived by the participants. The participants saw the ostracizers as the dominant, resourceful and secure in-group and themselves the opposite. They felt vulnerable, insecure, and insignificant. They were all aware their jobs were at risk, even those who were ostracized by co-workers. The threat of losing the job, and therefore the financial means to survive, was devastating. This ensured some degree of cooperation or compliance from the person being ostracized. Much like the schoolyard bully, the

ostracizer was able to utilize their power to get, to some degree, what they wanted. In the process, it created barriers that the participants were not able to overcome.

This power analysis represents the foundation upon which the remaining analysis is based. Using the steps outlined in the methodology section for critical discourse analysis, three important themes are identified which represent the application of the power framework to the obstacles.

6.3 Obstacle 1: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Traits

This analysis is based upon a number of the topics that have already been discussed, most importantly the emotional consequences of persistent workplace ostracism, the stressful work environment and the non-power of the participants. When examining these three areas from a critical discourse analysis framework, all of these descriptions became barriers for the participants. Individually, they are all significant barriers. However, when combined, they present another alternative for interpreting the outcomes of ostracism.

The permanent impacts of persistent workplace ostracism remain unknown. While for some interviewees, the incidents had taken place years before, yet there are still lingering consequences. The experience of the ostracism was easily recalled. Participants rarely said ‘I don’t remember’. Specific situations and interactions appear to be etched in their memories. Approximately half of the participants openly displayed or reported

distress during the interview process. This included the actual interview situation, reviewing their transcripts and reading the experiences of others. Some commented that the process was a re-living of the experience. Some found this process to be helpful and others painful, at various times.

There are three participants who, in my opinion, have largely moved past the reported immediate, negative consequences of the ostracism. This is not to suggest that there are no long-term impacts, but that they have managed to effectively cope with the short-term consequences. They share the following characteristics:

- 1) strong and supportive family/friend network
- 2) restored sense of meaningful existence
- 3) did not experience/perceive a mental health break as a result of the ostracism
- 4) have found a healthy or healthier workplace in which they are not experiencing ostracism

I make this assessment based upon the interview data, the similarities between the cases, and my personal training and skills as both a researcher and Registered Psychotherapist. Based upon the reports of anxiety, depression and other negative emotions, I have made my own assessment of mental health impacts in terms of severity. For this judgment, I draw on both my experience as a therapist and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-V) (APA, 2013).

As well, it is pertinent to mention that self-reports of mental health are one of the primary ways that clinicians determine levels of distress and arrive at diagnoses. Self-

reports of mental health symptoms for clinical practice are generally regarded as a valid source of information for assessing depression (Rush et al., 2003) and social anxiety (Fresco, Coles, Heimberg, Liebowitz, Hami, Stein & Goetz, 2001). In these two areas, self reports have been shown to be comparable to clinician assessments (Fresco et al, 2001; Rush et al., 2003).

The participants report being treated as if they were irrelevant, disposable, insignificant and useless. Being subjected to these messages for a prolonged period of time with few supportive resources has been devastating for these participants.

Knowing that each day you will either fear, or feel rejected, isolated, anxious and alone, for hours at a time, constitutes an inhumane treatment. To constantly worry about what might happen next, how you might be increasingly vulnerable, how you will need to continue to put forward both good efforts and a good attitude, all the while worried about your job security and financial security, is far beyond the usual description of workplace stress. The reality of persistent workplace ostracism as reported by the participants is that it has impacts that are unrelenting. It is described as unpredictable, dehumanizing, demoralizing and continuous.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a disorder that is related to experiencing a traumatic event. The event may be particularly stressful due to the threat it presents, the shock of the event or the severity of the trauma itself. The clinical definition of PTSD as defined by the American Psychiatric Association outlines a number of criteria against which symptoms are assessed to determine if an individual meets the threshold for a diagnosis (APA, 2013).

The key criteria are the stressor itself (exposure to a traumatic event or events), intrusion symptoms (such as memories and distress), avoidance and negative thoughts and emotions. Additionally, there are criteria related to changes in behaviour (such as self-destructive behaviour, sleep disturbances), the duration of the symptoms and the manner in which regular functioning is disrupted (APA, 2013). The complete criteria is presented in Appendix D, as per the DSM-V (APA, 2013).

Many participants described on-going impacts of ostracism that would meet the criteria for PTSD. In no way am I attempting to ‘diagnose’ any of the participants. Rather, by showing the reported cumulative impacts of ostracism within the PTSD framework, coupled with the non-power previously described, it is possible to see how severe and detrimental this experience can be. I am proposing that this experience is strong enough to parallel, or mimic, PTSD.

The stressor for workplace ostracism is challenging to identify, because it is not a one-event stressor (such as a natural disaster like an earthquake or witnessing someone being killed). The stressor with ostracism can be difficult to see, but was clearly described by the participants. The compounding nature of persistent workplace ostracism results in ongoing direct and indirect stressors. Not only is the ostracism itself an event, but it includes also the anticipation of probable future events. Within the stressor definition, I argue that persistent workplace ostracism falls under the exposure category of “actual or threatened serious injury” (APA, 2013, p. 271). While this category may be intended for physical injury, I believe a very strong case can be made for emotional, social and professional injury.

The lasting impacts of reduced self-esteem, increased anxiety, depression, and rumination, physical symptoms, social impairments and isolation, are not easily overcome. These resemble the similar threats of the traditional PTSD events as defined by the APA (2013). The stressor of persistent workplace ostracism may be equally as damaging to individuals as other traumatic events.

Intrusion symptoms are those ways in which the traumatic event is re-experienced. This can include:

recurrent, involuntary and intensive distressing memories, recurrent distressing dreams...dissociative reactions...intense or prolonged psychological distress and exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event or events, marked psychological reactions to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event or events (APA, 2013, p271).

There were many self-reports of these symptoms, as participants described being triggered by locations of workplaces, seeing the ostracizer in the community or on social media. Triggers also included memories of events or perceiving similarities in non-similar situations. Most dominant, however, was the prolonged mental distress that was reportedly caused by the ostracism. Many participants reported finding it difficult, and at times impossible, to stop the intrusive thoughts related to the ostracism. Nearly all of the participants also described changes within their bodies related to the chronic stress, such as disordered eating, problems with relaxation and concentration.

Persistent avoidance is the next criteria, which involves both cognition-based and physically-based avoidance (APA, 2013). This again was described within the study, as participants reported attempting to block the workplace experience, avoiding the ostracizer and his/her networks, trying to reduce or avoid social interactions with the ostracizer and in some cases, entirely avoiding social interactions in order to try to escape the thoughts and feelings associated with the ostracism.

Changing moods and thoughts towards the negative is also a symptom of PTSD. Perhaps the strongest link with ostracism for this category is “persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs or expectations about oneself, others, or the world... (and) persistent negative emotional state” (APA, 2013, p. 272). This category also includes withdrawing from activities and emotional isolation from others. All of these reactions were reported many times and for long durations by the participants within this study. The majority of participants repeatedly blamed themselves, had little self-confidence or self-efficacy, were experiencing ongoing anxiety, reduced social activities and interactions with family and friends. Further, participants self-diagnosed issues of anxiety, worry, sadness and hopelessness.

The criteria related to arousal and reactivity describes worsening behaviours such as “irritable behaviour and angry outbursts, reckless or self-destructive behaviour, hyper vigilance, exaggerate startle response, problems with concentration, sleep disturbances” (APA, 2013, p. 272). These impacts were clearly outlined in the emotional and social descriptions of the Narratives of Workplace Ostracism chapter.

Duration of the symptoms is also a factor when determining PTSD. The symptoms must be present for “more than 1 month” (APA, 2013, p. 272). This would be the case for all the participants, as would be expected in a study of ‘persistent’ workplace ostracism. It is also important to note that for those participants who reported either leaving the workplace or going on a sick leave that the symptoms did persist. To recover from persistent workplace ostracism is or was a process, not an event associated with leaving the workplace or not being exposed to the ostracizer.

The final criterion is that “the disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning” (APA, 2013, p. 272). For almost all participants it was difficult to engage in social events or want to join in activities separate from work. The occupational component is more difficult to assess, as this is also the location of the stressor. However, almost all participants identified issues with performance that were related to the ostracism as opposed to skills and abilities.

From this breakdown of the PTSD criteria, there are many parallels that indicate that persistent workplace ostracism may be considered an ‘event’ within the PTSD definition. Therefore, it is suggested that persistent ostracism can be as traumatic to an individual as other events as defined in the PTSD definition in the DSM-V. Preliminary and exploratory research on repeat bullying is also suggesting a similar connection (Balducci, Fraccaroli & Schaufeli, 2011; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004; Nielsen, Tanger, Idsoe, Matthiesen & Mageroy, 2015; Rodriguez-Munoz, Moreno-Jimenez, Vergel &

Hernandez, 2010). This is illustrated by the lasting impacts of ostracism reported by the participants: removing the stressor did not remove the trauma response.

This analysis incorporates the participant realities with the assessment of non-power. The lasting experiences of being helpless, hopeless and fearful are compounded by the organizationally supported power bases. This is also true for the next obstacle to be presented: abusive relationships.

6.4 Obstacle 2: Abusive Relationships

The first obstacle, post traumatic stress disorder traits, presented essentially an internal obstacle for participants. This obstacle, while created outside of themselves, has become a facet of mental health. This second obstacle, abusive relationships, is presented as an external obstacle, however, the factors which enable this obstacle to continue, are also internal. As with other complex social and psychological issues, the impacts of such an obstacle are not confined to one dimension.

Persistent workplace ostracism resembles, on a psychological and structural level, that of an abusive relationship. Within abusive relationships, one person has an extreme amount of power over another, and intentionally uses that power to harm (Michalski, 2004; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Rosenbaum & Leisring, 2003). The person being abused is trapped, isolated and controlled. She may not have full access to resources due to the position of the abuser. I offer this perspective as a description of how the ostracizer

exerts control. Due to the abusive behaviour, the person being ostracized does not have full access to the tools needed to resolve the conflict or 'get out'. The ostracizer has control over the resources; in some cases due to the organizational position occupied, in others due to influential networks and finally by creating so much self-doubt that the person being ostracized becomes compromised so that they can not see a positive outcome or a 'way out'.

These obstacles become not only physical and social (for example: unable to escape the relationship or engage healthy supports) they are also emotional and mental (for example: repeatedly thinking that you are to blame for the ostracism).

While there are many theories that attempt to explain why some people are abusive (Rosenbaum & Leisring, 2003), there are no definite answers. I propose the same to be true for why some people choose to ostracize another. There may be psychological, social, cultural or political motivations or explanations. Regardless, it is a power-based position which results in one member occupying the non-power position.

The parallel between ostracism and abusive relationships will be compared based upon the "structural features of interpersonal relationships" (Michalski, 2004, p. 662) that encourage inequity and abuse.

One such feature is how socially isolated the individual is within the social group or network. Within workplace ostracism, as with abusive relationships, it is difficult to determine if the social isolation led to the risk of ostracism, or if the ostracism increased the level of isolation, or both. From the participant reports, it appears that both alternatives were occurring. For some, they did not have a pre-existing network within

the workplace, and for others the ostracism resulted in isolation. The research on abusive relationships links vulnerability with risk of abuse (Baumgartner, 1993). This same pattern can be overlaid with workplace ostracism. The more isolated the employee is, the more at risk they are for mistreatment, as they are without key social supports. This was reported by the participants as not only did they perceive themselves as socially isolated from peers, they also were lacking other social supports at work.

The second factor related to social isolation is the presence of others. As many of the ostracizing behaviours can be difficult to observe, it also can decrease the likelihood of someone else intervening. Many participants reported examples of ostracism that would be invisible others, such as being left off of a meeting invite, non-verbal messages of disapproval such as eye rolling or ignoring, and not acknowledging. The more invisible a behaviour is, the more likely that no one will speak up. Within abusive relationships, many of the behaviours occur in private or in one-to-one situations. When there is no third party aware of or present during the abuse, the risk is greater.

A structural social factor which decreases the risk of abuse is “the concept of integrated networks” (Michalski, 2004, p. 665). An integrated network in this context are people who are dependent upon each other for some purpose. Within the traditional abusive relationship definition, the integrated network could be a family. Within the context of workplace ostracism, it could be a team or cooperative work group. When there is an integrated network, there is two way dependence in which each member relies on another to fulfil a role. As such, when there is this type of mutual dependence, it is more likely that other forms of conflict resolution (such as negotiation or compromise)

will be utilized, as there is a degree of “social pressure to maintain a civil relationship when conflicts arise” (Michalski, 2004, p. 665). Within this study, participants reported working in close proximity or in a team-based environment, but this did not necessarily represent mutual dependency or the need for reciprocity. For those participants who identified ostracism by a superior, the integrated network would not be present. For others, although the participants reported working closely with others, there may not have been a level of task dependency. As a result, ostracism would be more likely as the ostracizer may not be dependent upon the participant to reach workplace goals.

Another risk factor for abusive relationships is inequality. The inequality is often related to “economic or political resources” (Michalski, 2004, p. 665). In the case of workplace ostracism, this could be represented as the need to maintain employment for financial resources and the political resources such as supportive managers or an advocate. This has been presented within the descriptions of organizationally supported power. Most participants reported staying at the employer due to financial pressures and most did not have an internal ally at work. Therefore while the context of a workplace is very different from that of an intimate personal relationship, the factors related to inequality transpose. Further, as over half of the participants report ostracism from a supervisor, this would also be considered an inequity factor in terms of formal power within the workplace.

Relational distance is defined as “the degree to which [people] participate in one another’s lives” (Black, 2010, p. 40). A high relational distance would represent a low level of intimacy. Within a workplace, a high level of relational distance would mean a

lack of connection, friendship or personal sharing. Higher levels of relational distance have been linked to higher levels of violence (Lally & DeMaris, 2012; Michalski, 2004).

Most interviewees described high relational distance with the ostracizer. They described that the ostracizer did not ‘know’ them, there was a lack of social involvement or workplace pleasantries. The high relational distance and therefore lower levels of intimacy results in a lack of mutual respect or accountability. The high relational distance means that the weak bonds of the relationship makes abusive behaviour and mistreatment more likely.

Another factor which contributes to higher rates of abuse is centralized authority:

The notion of centralized authority refers to the concentration of available political resources in the hands of one party....under these conditions, the theory predicts higher rates of violent social control than in circumstances in which authority tends to be more diffuse or distributed more equally (Michalski, 2004, p. 667).

Within the described work groups, the participants identified centralized authority existing with most ostracizers. In some examples this was due to the organizational position, and in others it was related to the social authority as a result of belonging to, or leading, a strong social in-group. Being viewed as an authority figure, whether formally or informally, provided the ostracizer with a degree of legitimacy. This was also presented in the locations of power section.

The final structural factor identified as contributing to abusive relationships is termed “violent network exposure” (Michalski, 2004, p. 668). Networks refer to the

social environments that one has been part of or exposed to. “The notion parallels the thesis of social learning models but with an emphasis on the degree to which available networks afforded opportunities to resolve disputes through non violent strategies of conflict management” (Michalski, 2004, p. 668).

When translated to a workplace, these would be networks, or processes, by which conflicts could be settled or navigated in a healthy manner. It would also involve supportive peers and/or supervisors who maintain a network of problem solving approaches to conflict. According to the interviews, this type of network did not exist or was not available for them within the workplace. Participants on the whole did not identify informal conflict resolution or supervisors facilitating problem solving between employees. This lack of informal intervention increases the risk of abuse or mistreatment.

Based upon the participant reports, in most cases the six structural relationship factors were present. This increases the risk of abusive relationships, which I argue ostracism is an example. Continually ignoring, leaving out, dismissing and disregarding an individual, while not violent, certainly is abusive. Further, this type of treatment results in a barrier which seemingly has no method of resolution. As many participants stated, there would be no way to fix the situation short of leaving the relationship. The abusive nature of the relationship therefore becomes an obstacle without an alternative.

This idea of lack of alternatives is presented as an independent obstacle. The lack of resources, coupled with the dynamics of an abusive relationship and a traumatic

experience, requires a realistic, context and power informed evaluation of the alternatives.

6.5 Obstacle 3: Constraints to Alternatives for Responding

It may seem counter intuitive to present constraints to alternatives for responding as an obstacle instead of a solution. This section is a combination of a Stage 2 and Stage 4 critical discourse analysis of the combined obstacles and the ways barriers could be removed. Instead of focusing on resolution however, this section provides a rationale for why some potential solutions are in fact obstacles. This combination of solution-obstacle is an important part of the critical discourse analysis as it removes some options based on the participant's realities. Further, it recognizes that the power informed factors must be incorporated into a solution. Therefore this section will document the constraints which are imposed upon the alternatives for responding.

The interviews provided reports of what the participants perceived and considered to be available alternatives to cope with the ostracism at work. While a range of behaviours, informal and formal were available to the participants, not all options were utilized or viable. For example, the vast majority of the participants worked in an organization which had a Human Resources department, and the majority had policies on harassment, workplace violence or bullying. However, very few participants reported opting to utilize the formal resolution methods. Only one participant reported engaging in a formal investigation of the ostracizing behaviour, which resulted in a very positive outcome which terminated the ostracism. Two other participants reported that they sought

assistance from Human Resources but did not participate in an investigation. Rather, both participants claimed they felt further ostracized, victimized or targeted by Human Resources. The reported experiences of conflicts, complaints and in some cases discipline caused further deterioration rather than resolution. It should also be noted that in three situations Human Resources employees were reported to be the employees directly involved in the ostracism, thereby complicating the situation. It also gave participants the message that the Human Resources department represents management, versus providing support for employees.

Many participants who were not ostracized by their supervisor reported reaching out to the manager for assistance. In approximately half of the interviews, participants claimed that the manager either refused to get involved or failed to take action. In the other half of the cases the participants reported that the managers provided advice largely falling into two categories: try to work it out yourself or conflict resolution. There were no examples of effective conflict resolution reported. There were however, examples where the participants perceived relationships worsening and additional consequences from bringing the issue forward. It should also be noted that when approaching a manager, most of the participants described the performance-based issue (will not cooperate with me, unfair work distribution, not providing training) as opposed to labeling the ostracism. This may have impacted the outcome and the degree of seriousness as assessed by the manager.

However, I will suggest that if managers were not successful in resolving the presented task issue, it is unlikely they would have or could have, adequately addressed

the social, emotional and mental aspects of ostracism. A number of participants recognized that while the manager appeared to feel sorry for them that the manager did not know what action to take. For example, there were managers who reportedly witnessed the ostracism and while they reacted non-verbally, they did not speak up or address the behaviour at a future time (as far as the participants were aware). There were also participant reports of managers who made comments that were dismissive in nature, such as 'don't take it personally' or 'she is like that to everyone'.

From the perspective of the participants, with manager responses lacking any substance and Human Resources not viewed as a credible or neutral resource, there were few organizational alternatives available. There were two participants who reported utilizing the union representative for support, and another who found some assistance from an occupational health and safety representative. However, none of these resources were able to mobilize an effective resolution.

There were three participants who reported that they left the organization as a result of illness. Some of the illness was due to a physical diagnosis, and some was due to the stress and mental health issues resulting from the ostracism. The participants were extremely clear in their descriptions that it was the ostracism that caused the sick leave. The impacts of the continual stress, both physical and mental, exacerbated existing or caused physical illness. Prior to the ostracism, the participants reported a history of adequately managing the physical illness. However, they stated that the level of stress associated with the ostracism was so severe that pre-existing conditions became unmanageable. Sick leave was one option to escape the ostracism while preserving, at

least in the short term, the employment relationship. However, this is not a permanent solution. Two of the employees who went on sick leave reported that they are still unable to work, and their incomes have been severely reduced. One other participant reports trying to have benefits reinstated by legal action. While sick leave may provide short-term respite, it is not a solution. Indeed, simply having time away from work did not resolve the impacts of ostracism for any of the participants. As previously discussed, it has taken various periods of time for the participants to recover from the ostracism; the majority report either still being in the situation or still experiencing some triggers.

This essentially eliminates most workplace based interventions. Outside of the workplace, very few participants reported seeking assistance from professionals. For some, this was because they did not feel that a doctor or counsellor could ‘fix’ the problem and therefore they did not engage. As well, this appears to be compounded by the feelings of hopelessness and the tendencies to isolate. The participants were unlikely to reach out to others when they had depleted personal resources. This coupled with the emotional distress and lack of power meant that most participants did not seek assistance for the physical, mental or emotional consequences. This of course contributed to the feelings of hopelessness and the tendencies to isolate. Many of the participants became trapped in a cycle with no ability to see a path for resolution. This perspective will be addressed in the next chapter, Recommendations.

This chapter has presented a power based analysis of the reported reality of persistent workplace ostracism. The most significant obstacles of post traumatic stress

disorder traits, abusive relationships and constraints to alternatives to responding have been described, not only to ensure that a full analysis is presented, but also to determine the parameters for making recommendations. This analysis of workplace environment, locations of power and obstacles will be used to determine suggestions to reduce or overcome the likelihood of persistent workplace ostracism consequences. These recommendations, as well as the limitations of this study and suggestions for future areas of research will be presented next.

CHAPTER 7

RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

One of the difficulties for both individuals and organizations is finding effective ways to address complex interpersonal issues. Conflict management, whistle blowing policies and staff training have not always shown to be effective methods of dealing with issues such as workplace aggression or bullying (Hodgin, MacCurtain & Mannix-McNamara, 2014; Vickers, 2012). Further, it is important that any recommendations reflect the realities of the participants and the contexts in which they work.

The final chapter of this study will present recommendations for organizations and individuals to improve the responses to persistent workplace ostracism. These recommendations were designed based upon the information presented in both the Narratives of Workplace Ostracism and Analysis chapters. They are also informed by Stage 4 of the critical discourse analysis framework.

This chapters begins with an assessment of the current recommendations for addressing ostracism, with a focus on those studies which occurred in a workplace or with employees. This is followed by a set of recommendations designed to overcome the obstacles which have been identified, as well as ways to reduce some of the long term consequences reported by the participants.

The recommendations are then followed by a discussion of limitations as they relate to this study. The chapter concludes with suggestions of areas for future research, and then a final comment on reflexivity.

7.1 Summary and Critique of Recommendations from Existing Research

Before addressing the recommendations resulting from this study, it is important to look at what has already been suggested. As previously discussed, research on workplace ostracism is limited. As a result, so are recommendations on the best way to address, reduce or resolve ostracism at work. Further, there are no current studies on persistent workplace ostracism, and therefore no recommendations specific to addressing on-going situations at work.

Perhaps surprisingly, there were some studies which did not make any recommendations for individuals, managers or organizations. These studies suggested other areas for research, but did not present any practical or workplace based solutions (Ferris et al., 2008; Ferris et al., 2015; Hitlan et al., 2006b; Robinson et al., 2013).

The recommendations of previous studies have not addressed the responses for persistent ostracism. Therefore this section will assess the proposed recommendations which the current study evidence and resulting analysis would support or refute.

Existing Research – Supported Recommendations

For management interventions, most of the studies repeat the same recommendation, originally proposed by Williams (1997; 2001): “create a culture that discourages workplace ostracism,” (Wu et al., 2011, p. 39). The identical recommendation is repeated by Wu et al., (2012), Wu et al., (2015) and Zhao et al., (2013). While the creation of a culture which does not support ostracism certainly would be helpful, the mechanism by which that would happen remains unknown. At a minimum, it would require ensuring that the locations of power are addressed in an equitable and transparent manner. Further, extensive research has indicated that changing an organization’s culture and climate are long term activities which are very difficult to implement successfully (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015).

Other suggestions for ensuring a supportive culture or climate include “building a shared organizational vision, showing organizational support to employees, and promoting communication and cooperation (Wu et al., 2015, p. 14-15); “focus on maintaining favorable interpersonal relationships through increased cohesiveness, trust and communication” (Chung, 2015, p. 18); “eliminate cliques to foster an open, harmonious, caring, supportive, and ethical atmosphere...a healthy work climate in which compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude are expressed” (Yan et al., 2014, p. 888); “providing training to both managers and employees to enhance self-esteem, and avoid the use of ostracism” (Wu et al., 2012, p. 194); and, “encouraging open, transparent, and fair competition” (Zhao et al., 2013, p. 225).

The current study supports all of the previous recommendations regarding organizational culture and climate. There were many reports from participants in which they expressed that ostracism was supported either by management or the organization. These suggestions, while difficult to implement, could change the workplace norms so that there were fewer incidents of ostracism, or so that others would not support the behaviours of the ostracizer.

Zhao et al. (2013) offer the only recommendations specifically targeting the ostracizer, and suggest that “managers should develop and improve specific rules and regulations to restrict the excluder, such as clearing reporting channels, and guiding the excluders’ behaviors in line with acceptable norms of interpersonal behavior” (p. 225). This would be a recommendation also strongly supported by the current study. Immediate interventions with those who are publically ostracizing are presented in Recommendation #3.

The other recommendation from previous studies is related to workplace policy, as Yan et al. (2014) suggest “enforcing a staff code of conduct to restrain WOS behaviour” (p. 888). This recommendation is also supported by the current study, as specific identification of ostracism behaviours is rarely addressed within current policy and employee guidelines. Wu et al (2015) suggest “treating ostracism as any other act of aggression or hostility” (p. 14). The current study also supports this recommendation, and extends the practice to include specific training and accountability (see Recommendations #1 and #2).

Finally, Chung (2015) highlights an important piece of awareness. “Managers must be wary of forming biases of members within work teams, as the quality of the relationships between the manager and in-group and out-group members may cause feelings of exclusion and dissimilarity” (p. 18). The role of the manager as a model for workplace norms is included and expanded upon in Recommendation # 4.

Existing Research – Refuted Recommendations

Most of the existing recommendations for resolving workplace ostracism focus on the individual being ostracized. There are studies which suggest that one way to reduce workplace ostracism is by not hiring, or by screening for some of the characteristics that may make someone more at risk of ostracism. This includes testing for specific traits and/or assessing through interviews as a way of not hiring those who: have a present or past orientation (as opposed to future orientation) (Balliet & Ferris, 2013); have low levels of political skills (Wu et al., 2012; Zhao et al., 2013); have a reactive personality (Zhao, 2013); and, have low agreeableness and extroversion (Liu et al., 2013).

While these Human Resources screening practices could have the ability to reduce levels of workplace ostracism, within the Canadian workforce they may not be legal or ethical. For example, some of the traits described could be associated with national or ethnic origin (Canadian Human Rights Act, 1985), ancestry or place of origin (Ontario Human Rights Code, 2013), or disability (Canadian Human Rights Act, 1985; Ontario Human Rights Code, 2013). As these are protected grounds, they would not be bona-fide reasons to not hire a potential employee.

Further, this type of recommendation suggests that the person being ostracized ‘caused’ the ostracism as a result of their personality or behaviour. This implies that there is something about the individual that invites or encourages ostracism. To date, there has been no research, workplace or otherwise, that substantiates that the target of ostracism is responsible for being ostracized. This could also be seen as an extension of bullying literature, and other areas in which the victim is blamed for the aggressive and inappropriate actions of others. The ‘blame the victim’ stance seems to appear when there is no easy way to address a complex social issue. Therefore none of the recommendations related to screening or blaming the targets of ostracism, or those who may be susceptible to ostracism are supported. In fact, based upon the analysis from this study, blaming the target of ostracism will further compound the consequences experienced by individuals. A change in this dominant discourse is needed if the issue of workplace ostracism is to be addressed in a manner which supports the individual being ostracized.

It is also important to note that there were no recommendations to screen employees who could potentially be ostracizers, or those who have high levels of need for control, impulse control issues or a history of interpersonal aggression. This could be due to the lack of literature on who ostracizes and why. We do not know why a particular employee becomes the target, and we do not know why a person would intentionally ostracize another employee, or how a particular target is selected. However, the lack of recommendations related to the ostracizer suggests a continuation of ‘blame the victim’.

Wu et al. (2015) recommend focusing on the employees who would be the most impacted by ostracism, which would include “employees higher in perceived job mobility, as they are more averse to ostracism and are more likely to engage in a de-identification process to withdraw their effort in performing citizenship behavior” (p. 14). They recommend finding ways to reduce ostracism by having the ostracized employee “increase their social acceptance at work...engage impression management tactics to construct positive images” (p. 14). This approach again suggests that it is the behavior of the ostracized employee that is to blame.

This is similar to some of the individual-focused recommendations of Wu et al (2012), as they suggest that one way for employees to reduce ostracism is to “promote political skill through training, counselling and mentoring” (p. 195). This recommendation was also supported by Yan et al (2014) and Zhao et al (2013). Wu et al (2011) also suggests that “management should pay special attention to these employees, and provide training, counseling and social support for them so as to help them stay away from workplace ostracism” (p. 39). Zhao et al (2013) also support this idea, suggesting that “an Employee Assistance Plan that enhances their emotional management training and counseling, in order to help them better cope with the destructive situations” (p. 225). While there certainly are indications for counseling and social support as a way to reduce the impacts of ostracism, this will not ultimately change the behaviour of the ostracizer. Again, these recommendations place the responsibility for ostracism on the target.

Mok & De Cremer (2016) suggest implementing “management practices that prime employees of money may be designed, such as the setting of financial goals for the

organization or individual clients” (p. 282). They propose that “exposure to money enables employees to maintain their organizational identification despite being ostracized, and furthermore, engage in prosocial behaviour” (p. 282). Within the current study, the constant reminder of financial dependence appears to have contributed to, as opposed to reducing, the stress of ostracism.

One of the most commonly cited recommendations for addressing ostracism at work is from Williams’ (1997; 2001) suggestions of encouraging face-to-face discussion to resolve ostracism. The study of lived experiences provides no support for this recommendation, and in fact suggests that this approach could further increase the negative consequences to the target of ostracism. This is due to a number of factors. First, a power differential exists between the ostracizer and the person being ostracized and this makes open dialogue difficult. This is highlighted by participant reports of fear and anxiety. Second, workplace ostracism is not a task conflict, but rather a complex interpersonal issue that presents risks to one party. Third, treating ostracism with a conflict resolution approach assumes both parties have to shoulder a degree of responsibility, when in fact one party is enacting violence/aggression on another. Instead of supporting this recommendation which is widely cited within the existing workplace ostracism research, the current study highlights an approach that is informed by those who have experienced persistent workplace ostracism, and considers the root of ostracism to be violence, not a difference of opinion. Further, it is surprising that Williams, who has conducted extensive research in ostracism, would suggest such a simple approach to a situation he himself when referring to persistent ostracism, has described as “especially risky to engage in social interactions because if rejected further, the individual risks total

exclusion” (Williams, 2007a, p. 442-443) and within his model, recognizes that “depleted coping resources resulting in acceptance of ostracism’s message: alienation, depression, helplessness, and worthlessness” (Williams, 2007b, p. 243) would impact the ability of the person being ostracized to fully participate in discussion based resolution strategies.

The following table summarizes the recommendations from the existing research, based upon the above discussion, based on whether or not they are supported or refuted.

Table 2

Supported and Refuted Workplace Ostracism Interventions

Supported Interventions	Refuted Interventions
Workplace culture which discourages ostracism	Human Resources screening to reject those who may be predisposed to ostracism
Healthy workplace climate which promotes trust, communication and cooperation	Train targets of ostracism on political skills and to stay away from ostracizers
Training to avoid the use of ostracism	Offer EAP to ostracized employees to help them develop coping mechanisms
Open, transparent and fair competition	Remind ostracized employees of their financial goals to increase the desire to stay with the organization
Rules and a code of conduct which restrict ostracizing behaviours	Face-to-face conflict resolution
Treat ostracism as an act of aggression or hostility	
Management awareness of personal bias and favouritism	

This table is presented to provide an overview of the existing recommendations which were considered when developing the specific recommendations as a result of the current study.

7.2 Recommendations

To develop the recommendations, the experiences of those who participated in the study were compared to the existing resources that they reported within the organization, as well as the issues identified during the Analysis. In particular, the locations of power, the obstacles and the long term consequences of ostracism were used to inform the recommendations.

This study is unique in that all of the participants experienced persistent workplace ostracism, most for a very long period of time. Therefore while the recommendations are focused on providing intervention and support for persistent ostracism, they would also apply for shorter term situations. Of course, the hope would be that additional awareness into the impacts of persistent ostracism highlights ways that organizations can respond so that situations no longer become continuous. These recommendations also extend some of the existing recommendations as presented above, with more detail and specificity, as the participants provided sufficient detail on how the context of the workplace supported ostracism, which is lacking in the other studies.

Very unfortunately, this study provides first- hand accounts of the lasting impacts of ostracism, which were used to inform the interventions for employees. The recommendations are practical, and based upon the reports of the participants, do not assume that workplace ostracism can be prevented or solved. However, it does offer suggestions for employees so that the harm that they experience as a result of persistent ostracism can be reduced or minimized.

In order to present a realistic and comprehensive response to workplace ostracism, it is important to look at a variety of possible interventions at different organizational levels. This section starts with a table which outlines the three levels of interventions and the titles of the suggested interventions. This is followed by a description and rationale for each of the interventions. First presented will be recommendations for organizations, followed by the management and human resources interventions, and ending with suggestions for individuals experiencing ostracism.

Table 3

Recommended Interventions

Organizational Interventions	Management and Human Resources Interventions	Suggestions For Those Experiencing Ostracism
Treat workplace ostracism as a Health and Safety issue.	Ensure managers have training on workplace ostracism.	Engage formal mental health supports.
Include workplace ostracism within workplace violence policies.	Actively provide empathy and emotional support for those being ostracized.	Seek job search assistance.
Utilize experts to conduct investigations.	Provide public redirection for ostracizing behaviours.	Practice non-confrontational problem solving.
		Pursue avenues to restore meaningful existence.

Organizational Interventions

As previous workplace recommendation have suggested, culture and climate set the tone for workplace behaviours and norms. This base for treatment and value of employees must support a framework in which power is not misused. Recognizing that a supportive culture is not easily obtained, it would significantly alter the experiences of employees. The following recommendations for organizations are designed to start to change the way that organizations and senior leaders view workplace ostracism.

The impact of organizational policies on workplace ostracism is unknown. However, research on bullying at work has not indicated that policy is the most effective means to stop or reduce the impacts (Hodgins, MacCurtain & McNamara, 2014; Vickers, 2012). While policy itself could not prevent ostracism, it is vital to ensure that ostracism is named and clearly identified within organizational documentation.

Recommendation #1: Treat workplace ostracism as a Health and Safety issue.

That's when I started getting physical issues and had to go see my doctor.

(Michelle)

Sometimes, I could, but sometimes it was hard to ignore because it wasn't always

safe for me. (Diana)

As this research clearly has identified, ostracism impacts the mental health of employees, which in turn impacts their ability to perform at work. Lack of concentration, work attendance, compromised relationships and fear reduce workplace effectiveness. Further, early intervention which addresses the health and safety needs of the employee would be beneficial not only to the individual, but also the workgroup and organization.

Approaching workplace ostracism as an issue of conflict resolution is not an appropriate response. I argue that workplace ostracism is not a conflict between two people, but rather it is a targeted, aggressive behavior toward one individual. It is an abusive relationship. This study has shown the psychological, stress, and social impacts which are a result of the actions of the ostracizer. These impacts have direct consequences on both the health and safety of the individual.

Viewing ostracism as a health and safety issue shifts the focus away from an assessment that there is an interpersonal conflict to one which identifies an aggressor and a target. Viewing ostracism from this perspective changes the way appropriate interventions are constructed. When attributing ostracism to interpersonal conflict, the impression is that both parties are responsible and should bear some obligation to settle the differences. When attributing ostracism to violence, the health and safety focus becomes much clearer. Effective interventions should address target safety, as the responsibility for the behaviour shifts to the aggressor and resources are mobilized for the target. This approach is not only more fitting, but also offers the best alternative for stopping the ostracism – holding the aggressor accountable.

Therefore, the first priority would be to ensure the safety and well-being of the individual. This would include physical, mental, emotional and social safety. Further, this response should both validate and support the employee being ostracized. The isolation should also reduce. By changing how ostracism is classified, from interpersonal conflict to a violence/harassment based health and safety issue, the responses should be far more effective. Health and safety issues are also reportable, have prescribed interventions, must comply with certain timelines for responding, and generally are viewed as more serious workplace issues.

Recommendation #2: Include workplace ostracism within workplace violence policy.

It was a long walk from the department to the employee parking lot and honestly sometimes I just didn't know what she would do. (Diana)

In Canada, workplace violence is defined as “any action, conduct, threat or gesture of a person towards an employee in their workplace that can reasonably be expected to cause harm, injury, or illness to that employee” (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2010, p. 3).

Within the Analysis chapter, the comparison of persistent ostracism and abuse was presented. From the definitions of violence it is clear that ostracism fits within this definition. The reported experiences of the participants also supports this definition, as clearly and consistently there was harm to the individuals.

Additionally, the impacts of harm are also described, which include “injury, anger, depression, guilt, anxiety, and post traumatic stress” (HRDC, 2010, p. 7). While the exact definition of ‘violence’ is not provided, bullying is identified as a factor, which can contribute to increasing the likelihood of violence, as are aggressive behaviours. Workplace ostracism, and examples of such should also be clearly identified within that policy. The inclusion of workplace ostracism in the violence policy also impacts other organizational activities. For example, most policies on violence require training, and have communication requirements for both management and staff, such as whistleblowing, disciplinary actions and follow up activities. Many organizations conduct annual employee surveys which include questions on knowledge of the policy, risk assessment, employee perceptions of safety, policy effectiveness, and witnessing of ostracism. These can provide management the means to gauge workplace ostracism behaviours.

Given the above definition, ostracism fits with the Canadian description of violence, and therefore it should clearly be referenced and included within policies on violence. Having a separate policy gives the impression that ostracism (or bullying), is not violence/harassment related, but some other type of distinct behaviour. This does a disservice to those employees who are targets of violent behaviours which do not have a

direct physical component. Finally, government requirements for violence/harassment policies and interventions also strengthen the responses to protect employees. In the case of violence and harassment, the government dictates what types of investigations and interventions are required. Including ostracism into definitions and policies on violence would offer more alternatives to those who are being ostracized.

Recommendation #3: Utilize experts to conduct investigations.

There was an incident at work against someone working beside him [ostracizer]...She was let go for using the policy from what I could see. I asked another manager to follow it through to investigations and eventually he let her go – it was a very clear message. (Izzy)

But the investigator kept reminding me...[that] she still can't treat me that way.
(Fran)

One of the issues identified by the participants was that Human Resources is on the 'side' of management. While it may not be possible to counter this perception, by utilizing consultants and experts to conduct investigations, the process of investigating could appear to have a degree of neutrality. This would be increasingly important for

those being ostracized by a supervisor or manager. Having a third party resource could encourage those being ostracized to bring concerns forward.

While some organizations would stipulate the use of third parties to conduct investigations, the practice is not the standard. For workplace violence policies the current guidelines from the Ontario Ministry of Labour (2016) recommends: “If the allegations of workplace harassment involve...senior leadership, president and above, the employer will refer the investigation to an external investigator to conduct an impartial investigation” (p. Schedule D).

An internal investigation for serious matters does not instill confidence in the employee. One of the clear messages from participants was that they did not trust the management. This was largely due to lack of responsiveness. Therefore for those being ostracized who try to find help by using the violence/harassment policy, the option of an external investigator should be available. This may also encourage more reporting of ostracism. Workplace violence policy recommendations also support this course of action, as they suggest that an organization would “have a list of competent persons’ who can investigate incidents of workplace violence” (HRDC, 2010, p. 17). The recommendation further outlines that the competent person:

- a) is impartial and is seen by the parties as impartial;
- b) has knowledge, training, and experience in issues related to workplace violence; and,
- c) has knowledge of relevant information.

Management/Human Resource Interventions

Throughout the interviews, participants clearly reported that a lack of management and Human Resources support was a contributing factor to the continuation of the ostracism. This section includes interventions which apply to both management and Human Resources staff, although the term management will be used to represent both. Management fulfills an important role in terms of addressing inappropriate behaviours amongst coworkers and of setting the tone for future interventions. Management is responsible for the well-being of employees.

Recommendation #4: Ensure all managers have comprehensive training on all types of workplace violence, with a focus on more subtle forms of control, such as ostracism.

We have workplace violence policy – Bill 168 – but that’s it, we don’t have anything else on ostracism (Sara, p. 5)

While the existing literature suggests the managers need training on how to support employees (Wu et al., 2011), this study suggests that managers first need a high degree of both self-awareness and education on what the different forms of workplace violence are and how to identify them. Within the current study one of the issues that was highlighted repeatedly was that managers did not seem to know what to do with an

ostracized employee or how to respond. Further, they did not appear to be aware of the personal, interpersonal, group or workplace performance impacts of ostracism. As a result, managers minimized, took no action or ignored the situation.

Managers need to be aware of what ostracism looks like, how they could identify if a person is being ostracized, and the impacts of workplace ostracism. Identification and early intervention would be two key aspects of manager training. As workplace bullying and ostracism are less obvious than other forms of violence and aggression, managers would need awareness training so they can look for the early signs of ostracism. Monitoring employee activities, both informal (such as breaks and lunch) as well as formal (behaviours in meetings) would be essential skills. Resolving ostracism once there is an established pattern of it would be extremely difficult. As with conflict resolution, early actions to stop the escalation is the most promising course of action. Management training would encourage timely and responsive management involvement to ensure relationships are not damaged beyond repair.

Recommendation #5: Actively provide empathy and emotional support to the employee being ostracized.

There was no empathy and no compassion....no support from the manager....they have to be more empathic towards people (Michelle)

This study reveals that lack of support from managers and being dismissed when concerns were brought forward were common in organizations. However, the lack of interpersonal support and the recognition of the emotionally difficult situation was also missing when the participants described managers' responses.

Like other 'victims', those experiencing workplace ostracism need to be heard and believed. By providing empathetic emotional responses the manager addresses two key aspects of ostracism. First, the person being ostracized will feel less isolated. This is important as isolation leads to many of the individual consequences such as anxiety and depression. Second, providing support for the person being ostracized sends a message to the other employees that the manager is aware and involved. The manager may require training in both empathetic responses and emotional intelligence in order to provide this type of support. Listening, validating and showing sensitivity to others' perspectives would be key skills for providing emotional support for someone experiencing ostracism at work.

Recommendation #6: Provide public redirection for ostracizing behaviours.

Then she made what I call the evil glare/cold shoulder and everyone witnessed it. My boss just looked down and everyone noticed why I was walking away, but no one said anything about it. (Brenda)

One of the most difficult aspects of workplace ostracism is that initially it can be invisible or very subtle. As reported by the participants, at first there is questioning of oneself to determine if ostracism is occurring. When a manager is trained on the early signs of workplace ostracism, they would also be able to draw attention to inappropriate behaviours. This would make the ostracizer aware that the manager is following behaviours and is willing to intervene. For example, making a statement in a group or meeting such as ‘please do not roll your eyes’ or ‘everyone has an equal voice’ sets both a tone and an expectation for behaviours. It reinforces appropriate co-worker treatment for all those who are present and sends a message to others.

This recommendation comes directly from the lived experiences of the study participants. All interviewees were able to give examples of times when they were ostracized in front of others, often with management present, and when this behaviour was not acknowledged. Some participants believed this was due to managers not knowing how to respond; some believed the manager did not want to address the behaviour; and others believe it was to avoid oneself being ostracized. While this type of intervention may be uncomfortable, it is also one way to address ostracism as it happens. There are no previous studies which recommend taking direct action when ostracism occurs. When examining the experiences reported by the participants, it is evident that there is a role for direct intervention. This would also be one of the few recommendations which could have the potential to stop the ostracism immediately.

Not only will speaking up in public forums set a tone within the workplace, it will likely spark discussion on appropriate behaviours. This type of intervention gives the

manager an opportunity to reinforce group expectations and norms. Modeling behaviours which identify ostracism encourages others to speak up in a less threatening manner. As previously discussed, it is the manager that sets the ethical and behavioural standards for the workgroup, as employees look to the manager for both formal and informal communication on what are the expectations. Publically speaking against or identifying ostracizing behaviours communicates to employees that they also can play a role in speaking up.

For Those Experiencing Workplace Ostracism

Following are recommendations for individuals who are experiencing workplace ostracism. These recommendations are meant to provide direction specifically to those in ostracizing situations in addition to the previously presented recommendations. These are intended to reduce the harm associated with persistent workplace ostracism. In no way are these recommendations meant to suggest that the person being ostracized is to blame or that it is within their control to stop the ostracism. Rather, these suggestions are meant to reduce the short and long-term personal harm.

Recommendation #7: Engage formal mental health supports

I think it psychologically scarred me. (Jana)

Based upon the interviews and the analysis, it is clear that persistent workplace ostracism has the potential to create serious issues related to self-esteem, anxiety, depression and potentially post-traumatic stress. However, many of the participants were not aware of the risks to mental health when the ostracism started. It is always difficult to encourage early intervention for mental health issues. Encouraging employees to seek help before the impacts are significant would require greater organizational awareness - this could be included in information posted related to workplace violence and harassment, or by having supervisors actively promote the use of EAP as well as normalizing the need for mental health support.

In order to minimize the severity of the consequences, connecting with a confidential, qualified mental health professional for support and coping strategies is recommended. When under extreme stress, formal supports can be effective as an early intervention strategy. Having supports which validate the experience, offer ideas for coping and someone that can monitor stress levels is important for the ongoing mental health of the individual.

Granted, this recommendation will not stop the ostracism. Rather, the goal of this recommendation is to reduce isolation, provide a formal support system to aid with coping and to monitor the mental health strain on the individual. This is perhaps the most important step for the person experiencing ostracism – to search for support as early as possible to minimize the longer term consequences.

Recommendation #8: Seek job search assistance

I felt like they could feel my negativity – some interviews I should have gotten the job but I never had the enthusiasm – I was dull, bare boned, low self-worth.
(Izzy)

This recommendation is not to be interpreted as a last resort or as a result of blame being placed on the ostracized employee. It is however, based on the lived experiences of those who have been continuously ostracized – if the ostracism does not stop, it is far too damaging for an employee to remain in a high risk and high stress environment. The personal costs, as expressed by the interviewees, are not only too high, but some of these consequences can be long-lasting, or even permanent. Again, it is helpful to view this recommendation in conjunction with the Analysis: persistent ostracism is an act of abuse supported by power imbalance which causes serious mental, physical and social costs. As a result, employment preservation, while perhaps desirable, is not always possible.

Thus, seeking job search assistance may be the fastest and safest way to exit the organization. While this in no way is suggesting that workplace ostracism should be condoned, it is important to recognize that the impacts on the individual may be severe and long-lasting. Exploring other job opportunities, while certainly not fair to the employee, may be necessary.

As individuals who experience persistent workplace ostracism are already compromised, this recommendation encourages seeking professional assistance to prepare resumes, search for new employment and prepare for the job interviews and negotiations. Many interviewees shared that they thought that some job search efforts were compromised as a result of the distress caused by the ostracism. Having a professional support to assist with the job search could help increase the possibility to successfully secure alternative employment.

Recommendation #9: Practice Non-Confrontational Problem Solving

I kept sending emails like ‘I don’t know why you’re unhappy with me, I hope we can resolve this, this is having an effect on my mental health. (Fran)

Employees who feel isolated or trapped may still need to function in the workplace. Most of the participants report trying to work things out with the ostracizer, at least in the beginning. Some did this directly by asking what the issue was, others by ingratiation, and others by increasing their task efforts and offering to help others. However, these strategies overall were not effective in ending or reducing the ostracism.

The primary concern may be to remain safe, and although this is an organizational responsibility, individuals can also employ practices which reduce the likelihood of further aggression. One such strategy is to practice non-confrontational problem solving.

This is recommended as “the more confrontational or aggressive the strategy, the more

likely it is that the relationship between the victim and perpetrator will escalate into a cycle of reciprocal aggressions” (Aquino & Thau, 2009, p. 731). This strategy would involve voicing opinions in a non-confrontational and non-blaming way, depersonalizing comments, focusing on task-related versus relationship-related issues and removing emotion from the communication.

These strategies will not stop the ostracism, but can provide the employee being ostracized with ways to continue to make organizational contributions in a safer manner. Direct confrontation or conflict resolution presents too many risks to the person being ostracized. This does not mean that they should be silent. Instead, contributions should be made in a way which does not increase the likelihood of additional ostracism. Non-confrontational problem solving may also help the employee to somewhat restore a sense of control.

Recommendation #10: Pursue other avenues to restore meaningful existence.

I think back on it now and I don't think I was fully engaged in life because I was just so consumed by the negative feelings. (Diana)

Looking for other opportunities was also a way to keep my mind off it. I did a lot of volunteer work...and I started to expand my social horizons. (Izzy)

While the participants did not use the term ‘meaningful existence’, the description provided of lack of worth and value was consistent. Many participants felt they were no longer able to make quality contributions at work or were not recognized as being valued members. Further, the reduction in self-esteem combined with the increase in stress meant that many of the participants were left feeling that they were not capable.

The dehumanization which accompanied the ostracism appears particularly damaging. While the emotional drain that occurs makes it difficult to continue engaging in activities outside of work, this is one of the practical steps an individual can take to counter the feelings of being useless or unnecessary.

A few of the participants spoke very positively about the impact of volunteer work in terms of providing purpose and restoring self-esteem. Volunteer work would be one such avenue for increasing meaningful existence. Being an accepted member of a group, working together toward a common goal, and generally feeling value and belonging would be therapeutic. This could also be accomplished through group sports, or perhaps other employment. The other possible arena for restoring meaningful existence would be by participating in training or education outside of the workplace. Finding ways to re-affirm personal value and importance is strongly recommended.

7.3 Limitations

As with any research, there are strengths and limitations related to the study. This is also true for this study of persistent workplace ostracism. The main limitation within

this study relates to generalizability. As a study of lived experiences, the findings cannot be widely generalized to all circumstances of persistent workplace ostracism. However, the commonalities within the experiences were striking, and appear to indicate that there are impacts of persistent workplace ostracism which are personally and professionally devastating.

While lack of generalizability may be a limitation, the utilization of the lived experiences approach is a strength. When conducting exploratory, qualitative research, the goal is not to classify the relationships between variables, but instead to identify and to understand the impacts of the experiences and situations. The exploration of lived experiences by interviews is an appropriate way to collect exploratory data. Due to the uniqueness of this study and methodology within the previous ostracism literature, it is unknown if the consequences of persistent ostracism are generalizable. They present an opportunity for further research which will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Another limitation is the nature of personal interviews and self-reports. Only the perspective of the person being ostracized is represented, and that will include their interpretations and biases. It is also important to remember that in terms of emotional and mental health self-reports, that previous research has indicated self-reports to produce outcomes similar to professional assessment and standardized tools (Fresco et al., 2001; Rush et al., 2003) Future research which includes co-workers of the ostracized individual could strengthen these findings. In terms of common method bias, two particular areas should be considered. First is consistency motif, in which the “tendency

of respondents to try and maintain consistency in their reports to similar questions or to organize information in consistent ways” (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003, p. 881). Within this study, one potential area in which consistency motif may have impacted could have been in reporting retaliation or aggressive behaviours. Participants may not have reported negative actions as this would not have been consistent with the view of being victimized. This also could have been the case with social desirability, as reports of aggressive behaviours would also be discouraged as they would not be viewed as pro-social (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

The nature of this study also does not allow for the identification of antecedents. It would have been helpful to fully understand the nature of relationships prior to the ostracism, in cases of those employees who had a period of non-ostracism. Understanding what might trigger ostracism would also be valuable knowledge. As well, not knowing the antecedents also limits the recommendations that can be made. As the study focuses only on the lived experiences, the recommendations are based upon the researcher’s analysis and the perceptions of the participants. The recommendations have not been tested, and further study, both research and practice based, would be necessary to determine if these recommendations could be effective.

All of the participants in this study were female. This may have been due to recruitment methods, as Human Resources professionals, a female dominated field, were asked to refer people to the study. It may also be that women are more comfortable participating in a study which requires personal disclosures and vulnerability. Research on bullying has also suggested that women may be more likely to identify and report

emotionally distressing situations (Rodriguez-Manoz, 2010). As a result, the narrative and critical discourse analysis identified obstacles that may be more relevant to female employees.

While a limitation of the current study is the generalizability, it is also a strength. By exploring the lived experiences of persistent workplace ostracism, a number of unique results provide many areas for future research.

7.4 Areas for Future Research

As a first study of the lived experiences of workplace ostracism, this research has expanded not only the definition of workplace ostracism but has presented a number of consequences that have yet to be explored within ostracism research. The use of critical discourse analysis has identified specific obstacles which also expands the knowledge of the enactment of ostracism at work. As a result of the lack of constraints which exist within a social constructionist framework, many new topics have been identified which can be used to expand research priorities.

One area to be explored is related to the long-term consequences described by the participants. A longitudinal study would allow for the identification of short and long term impacts, as well as an understanding of how the perception of the ostracism and consequences changes over time. Being able to identify the early signs and impacts could also improve interventions.

The participants identified impacts of ostracism which do not appear in the existing research which can now be examined in more depth, or data sets could be revisited. This would include a focus on physical health-based factors; changes in mental health, relationship status and maintenance; workplace-based factors such as disruption to team dynamics, changes in cognitive function and concentration, impacts on self-efficacy and decision making capabilities.

Another area that would be important to explore from a practitioner standpoint would be the organizational and management interventions. Of primary importance would be the ways in which the dominant discourse - blame the victim - could be altered by implementing the suggested recommendations. Currently, workplace ostracism research ends at identifying work based outcomes related to performance and commitment. Research on possible solutions is a vital next step.

Much of the research to date has focused on the impacts of being ostracized. While there are many areas related to ostracism that have yet to be studied, an important area of focus should be on the ostracizer. To shed light on who ostracizes and why could provide valuable information for employers to develop strategies of early intervention. As team work continues to grow in popularity, it would be important to address the factors which can limit or hinder team performance. A workplace-based study of ostracizers would be valuable in shifting the focus of intervention from the victim to the perpetrator, and the discourse from blame to accountability.

Exploratory research which presents the view of men, would also be an area of future interest. While there are some indications that men would respond in similar ways

to ostracism (for example, Wiek et al., 2010; Wirth et al., 2009) there are also propositions that they may respond differently (for example, Bozin & Yoder, 2008; Zwolinski, 2012). Comparing the results of this study to one with male subjects is suggested. Also, expanding on the gender component in terms of ostracized/ostracizer would provide additional information on power dynamics. This, coupled with organizational position would provide a clearer idea of gender differences and similarities.

A final area for exploration would be whether or not the ostracized individual can take steps to reduce the impact of the ostracism, as per the recommendations in this study. This would also be helpful from a health and safety perspective for the organization. Not only would this inform ostracism research, but it could present indicators for other types of harmful behaviours at work, such as bullying, harassment and incivility.

7.5 Conclusion

This study of the lived experiences of persistent workplace ostracism begins the collection of the personal experiences of ostracism at work and as such, identifies some of the personal consequences of such treatment. Coupled with the existing research on workplace bullying and incivility, it provides a more comprehensive view of the dangers of interpersonal violence and aggression at work. Allowing employees who have, and

are, currently experiencing persistent ostracism to present their perspective expands on the knowledge in a number of ways.

The theoretical contributions of this study fall into three categories. First, the study builds on the current definition of workplace ostracism by identifying additional ways in which ostracism is enacted at work. Second, it identifies consequences of workplace ostracism that have not previously been identified, expanding the knowledge not only of the impacts but also how they develop and change over time. Finally, this research identifies five critical obstacles to addressing persistent ostracism, which then both supports and refutes potential interventions.

The definition of workplace ostracism has been expanded to include specific workplace factors which were commonly experienced by the participants. Not only did this study confirm the existing examples, it helped to contextualize workplace ostracism. The narratives indicate that there are many non-verbal cues used at work to communicate ostracism, such as eye rolling, creating physical distance and hostile eye contact. Gossip was also identified as a component of ostracism which is used in two ways: to further isolate the ostracism target and to engage others in being participants or complicit to the ostracism. Not being invited to meetings, excluded from team decisions and the removal of key job duties were the other ways the definition was expanded. The contribution of an expanded definition provides for a more comprehensive view of the subtle ways that ostracism is communicated at work and can be used to inform models of ostracism.

The identification of consequences not previously studied is the second theoretical contribution of this study. It documents the progression of isolation and avoidance, as

well as the withdrawal from employment. This study provide examples of similarities with laboratory ostracism research (such as needs threats), it also identified consequences that have not yet been suggested or studied. These include emotional, social and professional consequences. Of particular interest is the ongoing questioning and blaming of self; loss of confidence and self-efficacy; high degrees of professional and social isolation; disruption of health behaviours related to daily routines; and negative performance factors related to emotional exhaustion. Not only does this examine the consequences to be considered, it also begins to answer questions related to how ostracism is internalized and why it is able to continue.

Another contribution is the reframing of the persistent experience into three key areas: post traumatic stress disorder traits; abusive relationships; and constraints to responding. These three obstacles identify the dynamic created by persistent workplace ostracism and how these are internalized by participants. This internalization impacts not only their view of self, but has also altered their worldview.

The change in worldview is also represented in the final two obstacles. This study illustrated the issues in recovery from ostracism and the persistence of the emotional, social and professional consequences. This is particularly strong for those who questioned their own value and purpose, not only at work but as human beings. The experience of persistent workplace ostracism has altered the worldview of many participants in a way that suggest some of the consequences may be permanent. This is a new and unique contribution which not only expands the knowledge of ostracism at work, but provides the initial data to examine interventions through a different lens. The

critical discourse analysis within this study suggest that the dominant discourse of blaming the victim not only encourages and maintains ostracism, it also results in ineffective workplace interventions. This study provides recommendations which recognize the locations of power within situations of persistent workplace ostracism and suggest practical ways they could begin to be addressed.

Finally, this study gives an opportunity for voice to those who have experienced an often hidden but painful workplace phenomena. Being left out, shunned and feeling as though you do not belong is an embarrassing, vulnerable and potentially dangerous situation for an employee to find themselves in. It takes great strength to share the information that the twelve participants willingly gave to this research. It will enrich the understanding of persistent workplace ostracism and hopefully result in concrete changes within workplaces. They should be commended for their courage, openness and commitment. I hope that their sharing not only legitimized and validated their thoughts, feelings and experiences, but enabled empowerment and healing.

7.6 Reflexivity – Final Processes and Thoughts

Throughout this study, the experiences of the participants, and particularly the emotional pain associated with their experiences is what has resonated with me the most. As I read and re-read the transcripts of the interviews, each time I was struck by the severity of their experiences, and the cruelty of the ostracizer.

While the analysis relating to post traumatic stress disorder traits and the constraints to responding became obvious to me early within the interviews, the dynamics of abusive relationships did not. It was only after multiple examinations of the locations of power when I started to see the pattern of participant expressions related to being trapped or stuck. As many of the comments were related to barriers to finding new employment, economics and the lack of emotional and physical resources to look for a job, the reality of not being able to ‘get out’ was initially hidden. However, when I began to look at how some employees had power and others did not, the reframing of victim-perpetrator in a violence framework became clear. I am surprised that I did not recognize this pattern earlier, as I have worked in a women’s shelter and with abused women as a therapist for many years. However, I feel that the true dynamic of the relationship was also obscured by some of the dominant discourse related to conflict resolution as the preferred method for addressing interpersonal issues at work. Once I started to see the parallels of being abused, marginalized and without resources, I contacted my PhD supervisor, as I was still questioning whether I was ‘going too far’ with my analysis. I am very grateful that he encouraged me to continue exploring this perspective.

It was this process which challenged me to develop recommendations which would be both specific and realistic from the perspective of a person experiencing ostracism. Informed by my work with abused women, suggestions such as ‘increase your self-esteem’ are not helpful. The framework of the five obstacles then became the foundation of the recommendations.

I was concerned when sending the recommendations to the participants. A number of the women had commented that they were interested to hear the outcomes of my study. Unfortunately, I received very little feedback on the recommendations and that which I did receive was more general, such as 'I enjoyed reading this chapter'.

There are many small changes that I would make if I did this type of research again, including expanding my recruitment methods and having more concrete methods of coding. However, if I could make one change to this study, I would have liked to have had another interview with all of the participants at the end of the process. If I had been able to talk to them again, I would want to ask a number of questions which I think would not only improve this study, but it could provide valuable information to the future study of workplace ostracism. In a second interview, I would have asked: What was it like to be a participant in this study? What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about others who have had a similar experience? Do you think there were benefits or harms to you as a result of participating? Do you see any of the five obstacles as current factors within your life? Which of the recommendations do you see as most fitting or reasonable? Are there any recommendations you do not think are appropriate?

The final thought I am left with at the end of this study related to the participants is whether or not it would be helpful for them to talk together. I am interested in this option as both a research approach and a therapy/support approach. I would be interested to know what other understandings could result from focus group research. I am also interested from a therapy viewpoint, in that it could potentially reduce some of the

isolation, shame and other negative cognitions, if the women could share their experiences together and receive validation and support from one another.

On a professional level, I am very interested continuing research on ostracism. In particular, pairing persistent ostracism and abusive supervision as an area for research. Based upon the descriptions of the participants, there are managers exhibiting behaviours that are clearly within the ostracism definition, but also those which would include other aspects of abusive supervision. Understanding the link between supervision style and ostracism behaviours could shed light on a number of different factors, including supervisory abuse of power, which employees are targeted during ostracism and whether or not the behaviour is that of one supervisor or a pattern of behaviour within an organization. I am also planning to pursue other methods of exploratory research related to complex workplace interactions, such as focus groups and observations. I think the information provided by these exploratory methods offer the best alternative for developing solutions to complex interpersonal issues at work.

As a final take away on a personal level, this study has forced me to consider my own behaviour in terms of inclusion at work. It has raised my awareness of the value of acknowledgment and the importance of considering how my behaviours, however small, can affect others. Being 'critical' of our own actions should be the first step.

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APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF OSTRACISM LITERATURE

*OP is ostracised participant

Methods of Invoking Ostracism:

Cyberball – computerized ball tossing game

O-Cam – computerized ball tossing game with video of other players

Recall – think or write about a time you were ostracized

Ostracism Feedback – told was not picked or included within current experiment (bogus feedback)

Future Alone – completed survey, told would experience ostracism in the future

Scenario – ostracism story, imagine this occurs

Type of Study:

Experiment – a situation in which a behaviour is tested and measured

Game – experiment which presents choices within a game format

Testing – physical or mental performance measure

Survey – questionnaire(s) completed of established measures

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Balliet & Ferris, 2013	Scenario, game	University students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispositional and state-level concern for the future buffers the negative impact of ostracism on helping behaviours • OP less likely to help others or cooperate • In workplace based scenario, negatively related to helping behaviours, future orientation reduced the negative impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggression • Anti-social responses
Bastian & Haslam, 2010	Recall, Cyberball, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP felt less human, viewed self as less human and believe others viewed self as less human • View oneself as object-like, emotionally inert, cold, rigid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human-ness • Irrelevance • Need to belong
Bastian, Jetten, Chen, Radke, Harding & Fasoli, 2012 *perpetrator perspective	Recall, Cyberball, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-dehumanizing for perpetrators, not accounted for by global self-evaluation or mood • Did not find social isolation as a mediator • Feeling dehumanized can motivate pro-social behaviour and self-sacrifice • Perpetrators of ostracism see themselves as less human than when they engage in a more positive interpersonal interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human-ness • Prosocial behaviours • Antisocial behaviours

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco & Twenge, 2005	Ostracism feedback, future alone, experiment, testing, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is some loss of self-control when socially excluded • Small negative impact on mood, but did not produce distress • Performed worse on assortment of self-regulation tasks • Instead of stimulating the adaptive response, rejection seems to elicit the opposite, some evidence of unwilling vs unable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-regulation • Mood • Prosocial behaviours • Antisocial behaviours
Baumeister & Leary, 1995	Theoretical, summary article		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire to form social attachments is a human need, even under adverse conditions • Forming social attachments produces positive emotions • Real, imagined or potential threats to social bonds generate a variety of unpleasant emotional states • Psychological and physical health problems are common in those lacking social connection • People need frequent, pleasant or positive interactions with the same individuals, and need them to occur in a framework of long-term, stable, caring relationships • Satiation and substitution play a role, will seek additional relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to belong • Mood • Physical impacts • Psychological impacts • Maintaining relationships

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Baumeister, Twenge & Nuss, 2002	Future alone, testing, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP had impaired intelligent performance • OP reduced effort and reduced recall on complex information • OP had impaired ability to retrieve from memory, impaired reasoning, no impact on simple information or mood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance • Cognition • Mood • Recall/Memory • Effort/Persistence
Bernstein, Sacco, Young, Hugenberg & Cook, 2010	Cyberball, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion hurts less when it comes from a racial out-group, hurts more from a racial in-group • When the group is essentialized, ostracism hurts more • Exclusion moderated by in-group/out-group relationship • Result of exclusion was a decrease in basic need satisfaction • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need satisfaction • In-group/Out-group • Gender
Bozin & Yoder, 2008	Cyberball, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP attributed blame for ostracism to partners, threat to control and self-esteem • The more a participant paid attention social cues, the harder they worked after ostracism • Men higher self-monitors but did not increase contributions – women less impacted by status manipulations – women contributed more than men on collective task when engaging with same sex groups – women’s contributions remained consistent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosocial behaviour • Antisocial behaviour • Need for control • Self-esteem • Persistence • Gender

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Buckner, DeWall, Schmidt & Maner, 2010	Ostracism feedback, testing, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP paid greater attention to positive faces for those with high fear of negative evaluation (looking for alternatives for inclusion) • Those with high fear of negative evaluation (social anxiety trait) attended to negative faces in neutral conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety
Carter-Sowell, Chen & Williams, 2008	Cyberball, experiment, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP were more susceptible to a persuasive attempt • May be trying to appeal to others to fortify social needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belonging
Chen, DeWall, Poon & Chen, 2012	Cyberball, scenario, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP who have strong destiny beliefs reported higher levels of aggression, behaved more aggressively • Those with strong destiny beliefs feel more fragile in relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggression
Chernyak & Zayas, 2010	Cyberball, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP viewed includers not as ally but as excluder to some degree • Propose that when ostracized, presume that a positive relationship exists between the others • Sensitivity to rejection extends to all those present, not just the excluder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belonging • Sensitivity

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Chow, Tiedens & Govan, 2008	Cyberball, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP were significantly angrier and sadder • Those who were angrier were more likely to behave in an aggressive manner, but not those who were sad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggression • Anger • Mood
Ciarocco, Sommer & Baumeister, 2001	Ostracism feedback, survey, testing	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ostracizing someone can be a difficult task that depletes the self's limited resources. Gave up more rapidly and had less physical stamina • Those who willingly complied with ostracizing became frustrated and quit earlier than others. • Anger didn't produce significant impact • Silence was found to be difficult and produced feelings of guilt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance • Effort • Mood • Need for control • Anger • Self Control
Derfler-Rozin, Pillutla & Thau, 2010	Ostracism feedback, game, survey	Experimental pool of subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP took action to reduce further exclusion by reciprocating more - try to fix situation. • OP didn't take social risks to reconnect. • Showed some control over behaviours that lead to inclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistence • Relationships • Need to belong • Need for control

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
DeWall & Baumeister, 2006	Future alone, testing, survey,	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially excluded participants showed significantly higher pain thresholds, no difference in mood valence or arousal • People were less sensitive to pain as a result of having their need to belong thwarted • Body responds like a shock reaction to painful emotional events that results in numbness and insensitivity • Those who were excluded showed less empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to belong • Pain • Mood • Numbness
DeWall, Gilman, Sharif, Carboni & Rice, 2012 *youth study	Survey	High school students, adolescence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistent ostracism was associated with lower self-control and higher depression • Ostracism moderated the impact of low self-control on depression • Gender findings significant, females reported higher levels of depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-control • Depression
DeWall, Maner & Rouby, 2009	Future alone, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP increased attention to potential signs of social acceptance • Attending to one type of face resulted in lack of attention to another type 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to belong • Attention to pro-social faces
DeWall, Twenge, Gitter & Baumeister, 2009	Ostracism feedback, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP more likely to interpret neutral stimuli as hostile • No difference in mood valence or mood arousal • The hostile cognitive bias led rejected participants to behave more aggressively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognition • Aggressive • Mood • Interpretation

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
DeWall, Twenge, Koole, Baumeister, Marquez & Reid, 2011	Ostracism feedback, task recall, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP showed consistent increase in attunement to positive emotional information • Positive attunement was to both emotions and memories • Provides support for automatic emotional regulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention to pro-social cues • Mood
Gardner, Pickett & Brewer, 2000	Ostracism feedback, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP recalled an increased level of both positive and negative social events • Sensitivity to social information varies as a function of belongingness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to belong • Attention to pro-social and anti-social cues
Gerber & Wheeler, 2014	Cyberball, survey,	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ostracism was more painful when it began at the start of a relationship • Those who expected rejection were less distressed when it occurred • All four needs negatively impacted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need satisfaction • Mood
Godwin, MacNevin, Zadro, Iannuzzelli, Weston, Gonsalkorale & Devine, 2014	Cyberball, O-Cam, recall, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O-Cam induced greater need depletion • All 3 methods produced reduction in all four needs • Being ostracized with the face-to-face was more powerful and painful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Face-to-face

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Goodacre & Zadro, 2010	O-Cam, theoretical summary		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O-Cam shows more significant impacts than other laboratory methods, more needs reduction, more aggressive behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction
Jamieson, Harkins, & Williams, 2010	Cyberball, survey, testing	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All four needs threatened • The ostracized participants were more motivated to perform well than included participants • Ostracised participants worked harder on cognitive ability tasks to gain social inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Performance • Effort
Jones, Carter-Sowell & Kelly, 2011	Game, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All four needs threatened • Ostracism negatively impacted perceived competence, liking of group members and mood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Mood • Cohesion
Jones, Carter-Sowell, Kelly & Williams, 2009	Game, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of partial ostracism match those of full ostracism, such as negative reactions, increased sadness and anger, all four needs threatened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Mood • Anger
Kashdan, DeWall, Masten, Pond Jr., Powell, Combs, Schurtz & Farmer, 2014	Diary recall, testing	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP had lower self-esteem and enhanced sensitivity to feedback • Emotional differentiation amplifies the risk associated with low self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem • Emotions • Sensitivity to feedback

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Kelly, McDonald & Rushby, 2012	Cyberball, survey, testing	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All four needs threatened • Mood significantly more negative • OP showed higher levels of arousal • Propose that the higher levels of arousal results in higher levels of stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Mood • Arousal • Stress
Kerr, Seok, Poulsen, Harris & Messe, 2008	Cyberball, survey, testing	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All four needs threatened • Stronger negative emotions and weaker positive emotions following ostracism • OP reduced the level of effort exerted • Ostracism undermines motivational gains, but inclusion did not increase it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Mood • Effort
Lau, Moulds, Richardson, 2009	Cyberball, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All four needs threatened • The impact on the needs decreased after 10 minutes, showing significant recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction
Leary, Twenge & Quinlivan, 2006	Summary Article		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people respond pro-socially and others anti-socially to rejection • Anger and aggression may be used to restore a sense of control following rejection • Aggression is not the most common reaction to rejection • Rejection may be the most common precursor to aggression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger • Aggression • Anti-social responses

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Maier-Rigaud, Martinsson & Staffiero, 2010	Public good experiment	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ostracized participants were the lowest contributors • Other group members would vote to ostracize the lowest contributors, resulting in further ostracism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution
Maner, DeWall, Baumeister & Schaller, 2007	Recall, game, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP had desire to renew affiliative bonds • OP preferred to work with others and had more interest in meeting others, gave more positive evaluations to others • Need to belong activated • Some had resurgence of social optimism and were welcoming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to belong • Pro-social behaviours
Masclat, 2003	Public good game		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation can be enhanced by radical form of peer pressure • Subjects were willing to exclude others and the threat of exclusion increased contributions and payoffs • Subjects willing to exclude for punishment of unfair behaviours and if not contributing equally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer pressure • Cooperation

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
McDonald & Donnellan, 2012	Cyberball, survey	Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality attributes were not related to individual's reactions to ostracism • Individuals high on openness reported higher levels of needs satisfaction, those higher on obsessive-compulsive reported lower • No evidence that low self-esteem exacerbates the effects of ostracism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality • Self-esteem
Molden, Lucas, Gardner, Dean & Knowles, 2009	Recall, Cyberball, survey	Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 4 needs threatened • OP with need for prevention had greater withdrawal focused on actions one should not have taken and stronger feelings of anxiety and anger, wanted to prevent further losses • Those with promotion motivations made more attempts at social reengagement, and had stronger feelings of dejection and sadness • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Emotions • Anxiety • Anger
Molet, Macquet, Lefebvre & Williams, 2013	Cyberball, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP had lower needs satisfaction • OP felt both ignored and excluded • OP had lower mood • Focused attention group had greater recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Mood • Recovery

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Nezlek, Wesselmann, Wheeler & Williams, 2012	Diary study	Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ostracism decreased needs satisfaction • Ostracism increased anger and decreased apology • Effects stronger when ostracized by friends and close others • Ostracism type showed strongest reactions to punitive, defensive and oblivious ostracism • OP felt worse when attribution was internal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Anger • Source of Ostracism
Oaten, Williams, Jones & Zadro, 2008	Cyberball, experiment, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP had reduced control, disrupted ability to self-regulate and manage behaviour • Socially anxious OP took longer to recover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for control • Self-regulation • Recovery
Poon, Chen & DeWall, 2013	Recall, Cyberball, scenario, experiment, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP had higher levels of dishonest intentions • OP had higher feelings of entitlement • Mood was not a mediator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Social behaviours
Ren, Wesselmann & Williams, 2013	Cyberball, survey	Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP had lower needs satisfaction • Self-construal aided recovery in belongingness and meaningful existence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Riva, Williams, Torstrick & Montali, 2014	Cyberball, survey, experiment	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female OP felt more excluded than male OP • OP more likely to obey directions • OP put forth more effort • Needs threat not found 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Gender • Effort
Sacco, Bernstein, Young & Hugenberg, 2014	Cyberball, experiment, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social pain following ostracism was higher when ostracizer was an in-group member • Effects found for race only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain • In-group
Sacco, Wirth, Hugenberg, Chen & Williams, 2011	Cyberball, experiment, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All four needs threatened • OP paid more attention to social stimuli 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction
Smart Richman & Leary, 2009	Theoretical, summary article		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed three motivated responses to ostracism: prosocial, withdrawal and avoidance, antisocial • Construals impacting behavior choice include: perceive cost of rejection, possibility of alternative relationships, expectation of relational repair, high value of relationships, chronicity, perceived unfairness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosocial behaviour • Antisocial behaviour

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Smith & Williams, 2004	Cell phone experiment, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All four needs threatened • OP had more negative mood and were angrier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Mood • Anger
Sommer & Yoon, 2013 *perpetrator perspective	Social exchange experiment, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignoring likable other depleted resources • Those in difficult social exchanges worked harder to regulate emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotions • Self-regulation
Stillman, Baumeister, Lambert, Crescioni, DeWall & Fincham, 2009	Future alone, Cyberball, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP had reduction in perception of life as meaningful • OP had increased loneliness and rejection • All areas of meaningful existence were negatively impacted: purpose, efficacy, value and self-worth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful existence • Mood
Stout & Dasgupta, 2011	Scenario, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-exclusive language resulted in negative emotional reactions and lower belonging, all results were more significant for women • Language ostracism resulted in strong desire to distance themselves • Linguistic cues invoked ostracism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender • Mood • Belongingness

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco & Bartels, 2007	Future alone, experiment, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP showed fewer helping behaviours, less volunteering, less cooperation, • OP had lower belongingness, reduced empathy • OP had fewer prosocial behaviours • Mood and self-esteem did not moderate • OP showed absence of emotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosocial behaviours • Belongingness • Mood
Twenge, Catanese & Baumeister, 2002	Future alone, experiment, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP showed increased self-defeating behaviours • Emotional distress and bad mood did not mediate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-defeating behaviours • Mood
Twenge, Catanese & Baumeister, 2003	Ostracism feedback, future alone, experiment, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP experienced distortions of time, more present oriented, showed lower levels of delayed gratification • OP showed no mood differences • OP had reduced meaningful existence, but not reduced control needs • OP had increased lethargy, slower reaction times, more likely to avoid self-awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful existence • Mood • Deconstructed mental state
Twenge, Zhang, Catanese, Dolan-Pascoe, Lyche & Baumeister, 2007	Ostracism feedback, future alone, experiment, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP showed aggression toward neutral people • OP reduced aggression when reminded of support connections • Mixed findings for self-esteem • Trust was a predictor of aggression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggression • Self-esteem

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Van Beest & Williams, 2006	Cyberball, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP had lower needs satisfaction and mood • Pain of ostracism was not reduced by financial benefits • Needs satisfaction lowered mood • OP showed more aggression and decreased prosocial behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Mood • Aggression • Prosocial behaviours
Van Beest, Williams & Van Dijk, 2011	Cyberball with bomb, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP had lower needs satisfaction and mood • OP had higher levels of aggression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Mood • Aggression
Warburton, Williams, Cairns, 2006	Ball toss, experiment, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP more likely to give punishment to another, were more aggressive • OP showed lowered control • OP had lower mood and higher stress arousal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggression • Need for control • Mood
Weschke & Niedeggen, 2013	Cyberball, medical testing, survey	Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP had lower needs satisfaction and mood • Alarm systems activated for social reward processing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Mood

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Wesselmann, Nairne & Williams, 2012	Theoretical, summary article		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ostracism is painful regardless of the medium, source or characteristics of the event • Adverse reactions are both physiological and psychological • There is an evolutionary component in which over detection of ostracism may serve survival purposes • Reactions to ostracism can be both pro and anti-social, such as aggression • Persistent ostracism may lead to more extreme consequences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain • Prosocial behaviours • Antisocial behaviours
Wesselmann, Wirth, Mroczek & Williams, 2012	Cyberball, testing, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OP affective valence decreased over time • OP high in social avoidance did not show more affect decline • OP recovered more slowly if they were high in social avoidance and distress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mood • Recovery
Williams, 2007a	Summary Article		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on the immediate impacts of ostracism • Brain areas activated as same as for physical pain • Ostracism increases sadness, anger and lowers four fundamental needs • People cope with pro-social and anti-social responses, depending upon which needs they are trying to fulfil • Highlights the need for studies of persistent ostracism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Mood • Pro-social responses • Anti-social responses

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Williams, 2007b	Summary article		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ostracism results in four needs threatened • Ostracized individuals have been shown to attend to and remember social information and be in tune with social/emotional inconsistencies more than included individuals • Ostracized individuals are more likely to conform, comply, work harder for the group • Long term ostracism leads to alienation, depression, helplessness and worthlessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Attention to social cues • Pro-social responses
Williams, Cheung & Choi, 2000	Cyberball (at home), survey	Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ostracism resulted in low group cohesiveness, negative mood • Only two needs threatened, belongingness and self-esteem (perhaps due to participants being in their home environments) • The more excluded, the stronger the negative impacts • Ostracized individuals were more likely to conform to an incorrect judgement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for belonging and self-esteem • Mood • Cohesion
Williams, Govan, Crocker, Tynan, Cruikshank & Lam, 2002	Cyberball (at home), chat rooms, survey	Adults, undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All four needs threatened, but control and self-esteem less so compared to face-to-face ostracism • In-group-out-group manipulation results not seen • Ostracized participants felt badly, reported less control, had increased negative moods, liked others less and were less comfortable whether the ostracism manipulation was obvious or subtle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Mood • In-group/Out-group

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Williams & Nida, 2011	Summary article		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All four needs threatened, personality does not mediate/moderate, ostracism experienced as pain • As long as re-inclusion is possible, people usually respond with prosocial behaviours • Antisocial responses related to restoring control and meaningful existence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Prosocial behaviours • Antisocial behaviours
Williams, Shore & Grahe, 1998	Developed silent treatment model tool, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a list of specific behaviours associated with the silent treatment • Descriptive study, suggested feelings and behaviours associated with the silent treatment • Suggest silent treatment can be used to restore need for control, while it reduces other needs • No gender differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Silent treatment
Williams & Sommer, 1997	Ostracism feedback, recall, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When ostracized, social compensation was robust for females but males tended to loaf • Females more likely to openly acknowledge feelings of rejection • Males tended to pretend ostracism was self- chosen, females questioned themselves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social loafing • Prosocial behaviours

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Wirth & Williams, 2009	Cyberball, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 4 needs threatened • OP had more negative mood and the experience was painful • Those who were ostracized and belonged to the group found it more difficult to recover • Ostracized individuals were more likely to feel discriminated against 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Mood • Pain • Group Membership
Zadro, Boland & Richardson, 2006	Cyberball, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 4 needs threatened • OP more likely to interpret ambiguous situations as threatening • Social anxiety affected the persistence of aversive effects of ostracism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Anxiety
Zadro & Gonsalkorale, 2014	Summary article		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the impacts on those who ostracize, and how it may help or hinder social relationships and needs satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Zadro, Williams & Richardson, 2005	Role play, survey	High school students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets of ostracism (compared to targets of argument) had larger negative impacts on 4 needs and levels of stress • Targets of argument had higher levels of arousal • Propose that targets of ostracism have less opportunity to participate in the conflict which in turn prevents them from engaging in behaviours that could satisfy needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Stress
Zadro, Williams, Richardson, 2004	Cyberball, survey	Undergrad students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All four needs threatened • Ostracized participants were angrier and enjoyed the game less • Ostracism by the computer or human was equally unpleasant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs satisfaction • Source of ostracism
Zwolinski, 2012	Testing, Cyberball	Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ostracized males showed more hostility • Ostracized females showed higher post stress cortisol • All four needs threatened, increased negative mood but didn't feel bad • Ostracized participants reported fewer positive ruminative cognitions during the game • Hostility in males persisted longer than the other impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender • Needs satisfaction • Mood • Rumination • Anger

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF WORKPLACE OSTRACISM LITERATURE

*WO – Workplace Ostracism

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Chung, 2015	Workplace Ostracism Scale, 2 wave self-reported survey	Employees, South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WO was negatively related to person-organization fit • WO had an indirect negative effect on organizational citizenship behaviours and deviant behaviours, both mediated by person-organizational fit and • Perceived organizational support moderated the relationship for organizational citizenship only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosocial Behaviours • Antisocial Behaviours
Ferris, Brown, Berry & Lian, 2008	Workplace Ostracism Scale, survey	Employed adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and validation of the Workplace Ostracism Scale • WO negatively impacted needs satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviour, job satisfaction and commitment, anxiety and depression • WO resulted in increased deviant behaviour and withdrawal behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosocial Behaviours • Antisocial Behaviours • Mood • Anxiety

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Ferris, Lian, Brown & Morrison, 2015	Workplace Ostracism Scale, survey	Employed adults and a work peer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WO negatively related to self-esteem and importance of performance to self-esteem • Importance of performance to self-esteem predicted organizational citizenship behaviours, organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance • Those with self-esteem linked to performance suffered more when WO was present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Esteem • Prosocial Behaviours • Antisocial Behaviours • Performance
Hiltan, Clifton & DeSoto, 2006	Workplace Exclusion Scale, survey	Working students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WO resulted in lowered supervisor and co-worker satisfaction for men and women • WO resulted in negative impacts on psychological well-being and self-esteem for men 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Esteem • Satisfaction • Well-Being • Gender
Hitlan, Kelly, Schepman & Zarate, 2006	Workplace vignettes of ostracism, survey	Undergraduate students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WO resulted in negative workplace attitudes and beliefs • WO reduced organizational commitment and citizenship • Language-based WO increased perceived threat and perceptions of prejudice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace • Attitudes • Prejudice

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Hitlan & Noel, 2009	Revised Workplace Exclusion Scale, survey	Employees, United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WO by supervisors and co-workers increased organizational counterproductive workplace behaviours • WO by co-workers increased interpersonal counterproductive workplace behaviours • Co-worker WO and extraversion accounted for a significant proportion of unique variance in prediction of interpersonal counterproductive work behaviours • Negative relationships emerged between openness to experience and agreeableness and interpersonal counterproductive work behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antisocial Behaviours • Personality
Leung, Wu, Chen & Young, 2011	Surveys, 3 waves of data	Employees, China, Hotels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WO had negative impacts on service provision, mediated by work engagement • High neuroticism resulted in poorer levels of service provision • Propose resources being used to deal with stress results in lower work motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace • Service provision • Work engagement • Stress • Personality

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Liu, Kwan, Lee & Hui, 2013	Surveys, 3 waves of data, including	Employees, China, Manufacturing Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WO had neither a direct or indirect effect on family satisfaction, although had a negative impact when work-home segregation was low • WO was positively related to work family conflict • Propose that ostracism may cause employees to become preoccupied with work-related matters resulting in decreased family life satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace • Work family conflict • Family satisfaction
Mok & de Cremer, 2016	Workplace Ostracism and Exclusion Scale, survey, experiment	Working adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminders of money moderate the negative relationship between WO and prosocial behaviour • Organizational identification acted as a mediator • Reminders of money did not increase self- efficacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational identification • Prosocial behaviour
Robinson, O'Reilly & Wang, 2013	Theoretical, summary article		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposeful ostracism will be more common in workplaces where <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ costs for engaging in ostracism are low ○ culture and policy avoids conflict ○ there is a flat hierarchical structure • Ostracism will be more intense when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is persistent and from many colleagues ○ When it compounds other losses such as resources at work ○ It compromises psychological needs ○ It is perceived as more threatening, or ostracizer is a valued relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Dynamics • Frequency • Risk • Organizational Culture

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Wu, Yim, Kwan & Zhang, 2012	2 time lagged studies, Workplace Ostracism scale, survey	Employees, China, Oil & Gas companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WO resulted in higher levels of psychological distress and work stress • Low levels of ingratiation and low levels of political skill increased the impacts of ostracism • WO resulted in an increased depressed mood and emotional exhaustion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mood • Psychological Distress • Work Stress • Ingratiation • Political Skill
Wu, Liu, Kwan & Lee, 2016	2 time lagged studies, Workplace Ostracism scale, survey	Employees, China, Oil & Gas companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WO can mitigate employees' organizational identification and citizenship behaviours, when they believe they have employment alternatives • Ostracism can shape one's perception of his or her relationship with the organization and then influence force driving citizenship behaviours • Those with lower job mobility less likely to engage in reduction of organizational identification • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace • Citizenship behaviours • Organizational identification • Job Mobility
Wu, Wei & Hui, 2011	3 wave data collection with supervisor – subordinate dyads, survey, Workplace Ostracism scale	Employees, China, Oil & Gas companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees high in neuroticism and disagreeableness and low in extroversion were more likely to be targets of WO • WO is negatively related to job performance • Employee organizational-based self-esteem mediated the relationships between ostracism and performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace • Performance • Personality • Organizational Self-Esteem

Article	Method of Invoking Ostracism, Type of Study	Participants	Findings	Topics
Yan, Zhuo, Long & Ji, 2014	Workplace Ostracism scale, 3 wave data collection with supervisor – subordinate dyads	Employees, China, various employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace ostracism depleted the self-control resources of the employees which lead to low levels of state self-control, organizational and interpersonal counter productive work behaviours • Proposes retaliation as a possible response to ostracism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace • Self-Control • Counter Productive Work Behaviours
Zhao, Peng & Sheard, 2013	2 wave study, supervisors – subordinates, survey	Employees, China, Hotels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WO resulted in higher levels of counterproductive work behaviours towards both individuals and organizations • Proactive personality and political skills moderated the relationship • Propose that proactive personality and political skills is used as a copier to restore the relationships by prosocial means 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counterproductive work behaviours • Prosocial behaviours

APPENDIX C
PARTICIPANT FORMS AND LETTERS

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Exploring the Lived Experiences of Workplace Ostracism
REB File # 15-243

Date

Hello! I am a PhD Business Administration Student with Saint Mary's University. As part of my PhD program requirements, I am conducting my thesis research under the supervision of Dr. Albert Mills.

You are being invited to participate in research related to the lived experience of workplace ostracism. We are inviting working men and women who have experienced ongoing workplace ostracism to participate in the study. We are looking for people who are currently, or have in the past, experienced ongoing workplace ostracism. Workplace ostracism is defined as intentionally being excluded or ignored at work, often in very subtle or sneaky ways. Examples might include that your name is left off of an important meeting invitation, people don't respond when you speak to them, or you aren't acknowledged when you come into a room.

The purpose of this research is to explore the lived experiences of ostracism experienced by employees. The current knowledge of workplace ostracism is limited. There is no research to date on the experiences of those who have experienced repeat workplace ostracism. As a result, there is also no research on how to cope with workplace ostracism, or what employers can do to address this workplace problem.

You would be interviewed in a private office space by one female interviewer. It is expected that the interview would last 2 hours, with a maximum of 3 hours. The interviews will be coded using a different name that you will select. The place of work will not be identified except to the interviewer. In the report, the workplaces and positions will not be revealed. Once the transcript of the interview is typed, you will be asked to review the transcript for accuracy and completeness, if you would like to continue participating. This is not required. You will also receive a draft copy of the findings of the research, and will be asked to comment on the findings and recommendations. This is also not required, but an option should you wish to continue participating. You will receive a complete copy of the research document at the end of the project. All of these documents will be delivered to securely, ensuring confidentiality and the protection of your information. The final version of the transcripts will be stripped of all identifying information and will be safely stored in a locked cabinet in a locked office. You would be interviewed in the summer/fall, and asked to provide

feedback on two additional occasions, throughout the fall of 2015. A final copy of the report is expected by December 2015.

The benefit of participating in this research is that it will afford you the opportunity to reflect on your ostracism experiences and how you were able to cope with such experiences. Self-reflection can be an empowering learning experience. You will also be making a very valuable contribution to an area of research that has not yet been explored. Our goal of this project is to be able to make recommendations that would improve the situations of those experiencing workplace ostracism.

It is unlikely that you will have a negative response to the interviews. However, there is a small risk that the re-visiting of the lived experiences could cause a minor psychological or emotional distress. The format of the interview is very open and you can determine what information you would like to share. We would like to know about the situation, what occurred, how you responded and coped, and how others in your workplace responded. You will be provided with a local 24 hour telephone support line, which we encourage you to call if you do have an adverse reaction.

You can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty by stopping the interview or by contacting the researcher. Any information that is provided would be destroyed if you withdraw from the study.

The data from the interviews will be combined with other interviews to identify trends or unique situations that people who experience ongoing workplace ostracism face. In addition to using this information to complete my thesis, I would also to share this information with the research community at conferences or in an academic publication.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this research opportunity with you in more details, and can be contacted at the information provided below. Thank you for considering participating!

Kathy Sanderson, PhD Student
Saint Mary's University

Certification:

The Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board has reviewed this research. If you have any questions or concerns about ethical matters or would like to discuss your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at ethics@smu.ca or (902) 420-5728.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Exploring the Lived Experiences of Workplace Ostracism
REB File # 15-243

Date

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The benefit of participating in this research is that it may afford you the opportunity to reflect on your ostracism experiences and how you were able to cope with such

experiences. Self-reflection can be an empowering learning experience, especially if you haven't had an opportunity to tell your story. You will also be making a valuable contribution to an area of research that has not yet been explored. Our goal of this project is to be able to make recommendations that would improve the situations of those experiencing workplace ostracism.

It is unlikely that you will have a negative response to the interviews. However, there is a small risk that the re-visiting of the lived experiences could cause a minor psychological or emotional distress. The format of the interview is very open and you can determine what information you would like to share. We would like to know about the situation, what occurred, how you responded and coped, and how others in your workplace responded. You will be provided with a local 24 hour telephone support line, which we encourage you to call if you do have an adverse reaction.

You can withdraw from the study at any time (prior to the finalization of the report, expected to be in November of 2015) without penalty by stopping the interview or by contacting the researcher. Any information that is provided would be destroyed if you withdraw from the study.

The data from the interviews will be combined with other interviews to identify trends or unique situations that people who experience ongoing workplace ostracism face. In addition to using this information to complete my thesis, I would also like to share this information with the research community at conferences or in an academic publication.

For more information on this study, please contact:

Kathy Sanderson
PhD Student
Administration
Saint Mary's University

Dr. Albert J. Mills
Director, PhD Business
Saint Mary's University

Certification:

The Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board has reviewed this research. If you have any questions or concerns about ethical matters or would like to discuss your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at ethics@smu.ca or (902) 420-5728.

Signature of Agreement:

**Exploring the Lived Experiences of Workplace Ostracism
REB File # 15-243**

I understand what this study is about, appreciate the risks and benefits, and that by consenting I agree to take part in this research study and do not waive any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can end my participation at any time without penalty.

I have had adequate time to think about the research study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I consent to my participation and the following:

- I will allow my interview to be recorded by audio-tape.
- I request that future contact with me occurs by: email, text, phone, courier, or other. (please circle your preference) and provide number or address: _____
- I realize that there is the opportunity to participate in reviewing my transcript and/or the study findings should I wish. This material will be delivered to you in a secure way. I request that these documents are sent to me by: email, courier, or other (please circle your preference) and provide number of address: _____

Participant

Signature : _____ Name (Printed) : _____ Date : _____

(Day/Month/Year)

Principal Investigator

Signature : _____ Name (Printed) : _____ Date : _____

(Day/Month/Year)

Please keep one copy of this form for your own records (to be provided)

FEEDBACK LETTER

Exploring the Lived Experiences of Workplace Ostracism

SMU REB File # 15-243

Kathy Sanderson, PhD Student

Saint Mary's University

Sobey School of Business

Date

Dear Participant:

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study and the time that you dedicated to participating in the interview. I hope that you will continue to participate by reviewing your interview transcript and the report of the findings, although this is not required.

As a reminder, the purpose of this study is to provide many insights into how individuals interpret and cope with adverse, potentially harmful, situations at work. The workplace is a significant social context, and one in which many people spend the majority of their day. Your contributions to the understanding of workplace ostracism will provide much needed information on how this experience affects employees.

The data collected during the interview will contribute to a better understanding of the link between workplace ostracism and possible means of coping. As well, the research will identify ways in which individuals and workplaces can respond to, intervene with, or perhaps prevent workplace ostracism. Our goal is to have an understanding of how to prevent or avoid the negative impacts of workplace ostracism.

Please remember that any data pertaining to you as an individual participant will be kept confidential. All identifying information will be stripped from your interview, which you will see in the copy of the interview that will be provided to you. Any identifying information will be stored separately and securely from the interview, and will only be used so that I may contact you. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan on sharing this information with the research community through seminars, conferences, presentations, and journal articles. Again, all information will be shared in a manner that supports complete confidentiality.

You will be asked to review the findings of the study, and to comment on those findings, should you wish to continue participating in the study. You will also be provided with a copy of the finalized research report. The study is expected to be fully completed before December 2015.

If at any time you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at either the phone number or email address listed at the bottom of the page. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.

If any aspect of the interview causes you to feel any anxiety or unease, please contact one of the researchers involved in the project as soon as possible. The researchers will ensure that you are provided with the appropriate support services information and referrals. You are also encouraged to call the Crisis Response Line at (807) 346-8282 or 1-888-269-3100. This service provides 24-hour, seven day a week crisis response telephone line and a 12 hour mobile response team including pre-crisis support, crisis assessment and intervention, counselling, referrals and services linkages and follow-up.

As with all Saint Mary's University projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board. Should you have any comments or concerns about ethical matters or would like to discuss your rights as a research participant, please contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at 902-420-5728 or ethics@smu.ca.

Thank you for your participation!

Kathy Sanderson, PhD Student
Saint Mary's University
Sobey School of Business

Dr. Albert Mills
Director of PhD Business Administration
Saint Mary's University
Sobey School of Business
Saint Mary's University

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH WORKPLACE OSTRACISM

- Reach out for help at work as soon as you sense something is wrong. Make a formal report to your supervisor so that they are aware of your experiences and ask that action be taken. Many workplaces have a Human Resources department or an Employee Assistance Program that can provide you with guidance and support.
- Don't isolate. It is important that you spend time with supportive people, such as family and friends. Continue to participate in activities that you find to be enjoyable.
- Be sure to eat healthy, get adequate sleep and do some form of daily physical activity. Maintaining a schedule can help decrease stress in all parts of your life and contribute to physical wellness.
- Spiritual and religious connections can be helpful as they contribute to feelings of belonging. Find groups where you feel welcome and valued.

HELPFUL WEBSITES – COPING WITH STRESS, ANXIETY and WORKPLACE STRESS:

Health Canada: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/life-vie/stress-eng.php>

Anxiety BC: <http://www.anxietybc.com/resources/anxiety.php>

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety:

<http://www.ccohs.ca/healthyworkplaces/topics/stress.html>

Help Guide.org http://helpguide.org/mental/stress_management_relief_coping.htm

APPENDIX D

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER CRITERION

- A. Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways:
1. Directly experiencing the traumatic event(s).
 2. Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others.
 3. Learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend. In cases of actual or threatened death of family member or friend, the event(s) must have been violent or accidental.
 4. Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s) (e.g., first responders collecting human remains; police officers repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse).
- Note: Criterion A4 does not apply to exposure through electronic media, television, movies, or pictures, unless this exposure is work related.
- B. Presence of one (or more) of the following intrusion symptoms associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning after the traumatic event(s) occurred:
1. Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of the traumatic event(s).
 2. Recurrent distressing dreams in which the content and/or affect of the dream are related to the traumatic event(s).
 3. Dissociative reactions (e.g., flashbacks) in which the individual feels or acts as if the traumatic event(s) were recurring. (Such reactions may occur on a continuum, with the most extreme expression being a complete loss of awareness of present surroundings.)
 4. Intense or prolonged psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event(s).
 5. Marked psychological reactions to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event(s).
- C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning after the traumatic event(s) occurred, as evidenced by one or both of the following:
1. Avoidance of or efforts to avoid distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings about or closely associated with the traumatic event(s).
 2. Avoidance of or efforts to avoid external reminders (people, places, conversations, activities, objects, situations) that arouse distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings about or closely associated with the traumatic event(s).
- D. Negative alterations in cognitions and mood associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning or worsening after the traumatic event(s) occurred, as evidenced by two (or more) of the following:

1. Inability to remember an important aspect of the traumatic event(s) (typically due to dissociative amnesia and not to other factors such as head injury, alcohol, or drugs).
2. Persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs or expectations about oneself, others, or the world (e.g., “I am bad,” “No one can be trusted,” “The world is completely dangerous,” “My whole nervous system is permanently ruined”).
3. Persistent, distorted cognitions about the cause or consequences of the traumatic event(s) that lead the individual to blame himself/herself or others.
4. Persistent negative emotion state (e.g., fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame).
5. Markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities.
6. Feelings of detachment or estrangement from others.
7. Persistent inability to experience positive emotions (e.g., inability to experience happiness, satisfaction, or loving feelings).

E. Marked alterations in arousal and reactivity associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning or worsening after the traumatic event(s) occurred, as evidence by two (or more) of the following:

1. Irritable behavior and angry outbursts (with little or no provocation) typically expressed as verbal or physical aggression toward people or objects.
2. Reckless or self-destructive behavior.
3. Hypervigilance.
4. Exaggerated startle response.
5. Problems with concentration.
6. Sleep disturbance (e.g., difficulty falling or staying asleep or restless sleep).

F. Duration of the disturbance (Criteria B, C, D, and E) is more than 1 month.

G. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

H. The disturbance is not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance (e.g., medication, alcohol) or another medical condition.